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PRESBYTERY OF NEW YORK

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The Presbyterian Church in the United States of America

AGAINST

The Rev. CHARLES A. BRIGGS, D.D.

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ARGUMENT

OF THE

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REV. JOSEPH J. LAMPE, D.D.,

*A Member of the Prosecuting Committee.*





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## INTRODUCTION.

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MR. MODERATOR AND BRETHREN:

WE all feel the pressure of Christian work and the responsibility of caring for the spiritual interests of the Church and of seeking the salvation of immortal souls so keenly, that we cannot fail to regard a trial for heresy as a great evil, an evil so great as to amount well-nigh to a calamity.

We all deeply deplore the state of things which confronts us.

But, however great the evil, and much to be deplored, trials for heresy may become a necessity. As in the family, so also in the Church, discipline may not only be necessary, but become the supreme duty of the hour; and it would surely be greatly to the discredit of the Church if, when that hour has come, it should have neither the grace nor the courage to be equal to the responsibility.

The inception of this trial was not left to the decision of any one individual. After a calm and prayerful investigation, the Presbytery itself decided that the emergency had arisen for the commencement of judicial process.

The Presbytery of New York, in view of the widespread disturbance which Dr. Briggs's utterances were creating in the Church, was obliged to do something to vindicate its own good name, and to prove its fidelity. Under such circumstances it is more than ever our solemn duty to examine all matters coming before us with the utmost thoroughness, candor and impartiality.

In a case like this, impartial examination is difficult. It is characteristic of our times to claim the utmost freedom of utterance and belief. Every one of us demands the largest lib-



erty as man's natural birthright, and denounces intolerance as one of the greatest evils.

But lovers of truth have ever thought it a privilege to sacrifice their liberty for her preservation, and intolerance itself, in defence of truth, has become a virtue. It was in the defence of truth that an Apostle of Christ, with rare courage, declared: "If any man preach any other Gospel unto you than that ye have received, let him be accursed."\*

It is one of the glories of the Presbyterian Church that, on the one hand, she has rendered grand service in securing for the individual man his liberty, and that, on the other, she has been intolerant of everything believed by her to be contrary to the truth of God; and it is precisely this supreme loyalty to the truth which has enabled her to render such splendid services to the cause of freedom.

All relations, both human and divine, require, for their very existence, an abridgment of individual liberty. This is true alike of the family, the State and all other social organizations. It would be very easy to press the point of liberty so far as to render the existence of these institutions impossible; but all agree that liberty shall be exercised only within the bounds of necessary laws and regulations. If one who, in politics, holds to the principle of protection, should join a society organized for the purpose of promulgating the doctrine of free trade, and should then begin to use his position and influence in the society to circulate the principles of protection, he would have no right to complain that his liberty was unjustly interfered with if he should find vigor enough in that society to place him quite outside of it. A natural sense of justice would lead every one to say, That is right.

Every particular Church must have conceded to it the elementary right of organized existence. This involves the further right of formulating articles of faith, expressive of her conception of biblical truth, and indicative of what the basis of her teaching shall be. And simple justice requires that

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\* Gal. i. 9.

those who receive ordination at her hand on that basis should stand honestly on it with her. A subscription of loyalty to the Bible and our standards necessitates an abridgment of individual liberty to that extent.

Neither God nor man compels any one to join his fortunes with any particular Church and creed; neither God nor man compels any one to maintain such union any longer than is consistent with his conscientious convictions; but both God and man will hold a man morally responsible for the performance of solemn engagements voluntarily assumed. This is not in any wise a question of liberty. It is, in the deepest sense, a question of morality. Heresy hunting, persecution for spreading erroneous doctrines, is simply impossible in this age of the world.

It is given to every man to proclaim from the house-top anything he may feel moved to utter, if it has the least tinge of decency about it. Dr. Briggs has the liberty to do this on his own responsibility. But he may not use this liberty at the expense of the rights of others. The Presbyterian Church has an equal right to be left free to say to what doctrines she will give her testimony, and to refuse her *imprimatur* for the promulgation of opinions which she considers subversive of fundamental truth.

A Church would merit only the contempt of men if it should offer articles of faith for subscription which it did not seriously hold; and equally so if, holding them seriously, it did not insist on compliance with them on the part of those whom it had placed in positions of trust and influence on the ground of accepting them. The whole thing would not only be immoral, but demoralizing. Graver questions than mere individual liberty are at stake here. Both the truth and the honor of the Church are involved. As much as Dr. Briggs, the Presbyterian Church is on trial to-day.

Scholarship, too, has been brought into the case to influence your decision; and, for that reason, a few words must be said here in reference to it.

It has been stated that Dr. Briggs knows more about the



Bible than all his co-Presbyters taken together. And it has also been boldly said that the Presbyterian Church, in prosecuting him for heresy, takes a position in favor of a narrow and superficial treatment of Scripture. No doubt some believe these statements. But they believe what is not true. There are many scholars as learned as Dr. Briggs. And our Church is in hearty accord with the best scholarship.

The Presbyterian Church, throughout its entire history, has taken the highest ground in favor of a broad and thorough scholarship. It favors the best learning in every department of research and culture. It maintains a standard of scholarship as high as that of any other Church in Christendom, persistently refusing to lower that standard, and insisting that all its ministers, in addition to possessing a liberal education in the arts, shall be able to read the Scripture in the original Hebrew and Greek. As a result of this course, it has produced a long and distinguished line of scholars, who have been able, not only to handle all matters pertaining to divinity with consummate ability, but also to prove themselves fully the peers of the best scholars in other lines of research. Let him who will, assert that the Presbyterian Church shrinks back from the highest and best scholarship of the day. All fair-minded people will say it is untrue.

But the Presbyterian Church places faith above mere scholarship. It recognizes the truth that the one supreme and distinguishing characteristic of Christian people is, that they *are believers*. They are an army of believers, called of God to fight the good fight, in which, not learning, but faith itself gives them strength and courage, since by it they lay hold of the arm of the Lord and make real the help of heaven for the conflict on earth. The power of the Church is measured by its faith in the truth and promise of God. And so it has ever been the supreme duty of the Church to guard against that falling away which comes through a desire for new things, and above all, to see to it that there shall be faith on the earth at the coming of her Lord.

A scholarship, which is not in subjection to faith, has al-

ways led to doubt, negation and weakness. And the learning of the world has largely, from the beginning, arrayed itself against the revealed truth of God. For more than 1,800 years, men who have boasted of their intellectual powers, their culture and progress, have sneered at the simplicity of the Gospel of Jesus Christ.

This Gospel has ever been only foolishness to the Greeks. It has not pleased God to call many of the wise, the mighty and the noble. He has selected the base and foolish and weak,\* whom He has made strong by the grace of faith, to vanquish the most powerful systems of human thought which have arrayed themselves against His truth, and to advance His cause in the earth. In her faith, the Church has been strong to do all things.

But the Church welcomes the deepest and broadest Christian scholarship, and rejoices in the grand service it renders in the cause of the truth. No one objects to submitting the sacred Scriptures to the most searching scrutiny, if it be done with reverence, candor and fairness.

Objections are raised only against the methods of what is known as the higher criticism, the most distinguishing feature of which is its audacity. Intoxicated with its own immensity, it has brought itself under deserved suspicion. It brands a distinguished company of Christian scholars, who have done yeoman service in the maintenance and defence of God's truth, as mere traditionalists, who, in ignorance and prejudice, have despoiled the people of their Bible by erecting impassable barriers about it, and presents itself as the one great oracle of truth and certainty. Nothing, it claims, has been settled by the great thinkers of the Church during more than eighteen centuries.

It is freely admitted that the defenders of higher criticism exhibit a large amount of erudition and research, but when one presses his way through all the material gathered, through the language and the style, and arrives at the concept of the inner

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\* 1 Cor. i. 26-28.



substance, he finds nothing but *conjecture*. The immense pile rests simply on unverified conjecture, on mere *subjective impressions*.

The questions of liberty and scholarship are not involved in this case. We all favor both in loyalty to truth and faith. Nor should any other extrinsic issue be brought in to influence the decision of this court. It is the duty of every brother to decide candidly on the matter in hand without personal prejudice on the one hand or personal sympathy on the other.

Dr. Briggs has laid down a well-considered scheme of thought as the basis of what he proposes to teach. Any one who has read his published works will admit that the Inaugural Address gives us nothing but a condensed and matured statement of the principles and doctrines which for years he has been advancing.

Dr. Briggs himself maintains that he has said nothing in his address which he has not stated before. It is, therefore, entirely fair to judge of the soundness or unsoundness of his teaching by the views expressed in the Inaugural; and the decision ought to be on these *matured declarations* of Dr. Briggs, which were made under circumstances so sacred and responsible.

He has not withdrawn any of them. The position remains unchanged. Dr. Briggs delivered the Inaugural Address after he had made an orthodox subscription. Last year, after he had given his Response to the Charges and Specifications, in which he was thought by many to have modified his objectionable views, he republished the Inaugural in a new edition, and stated in the Preface of it, that he saw no reason for changing either the matter or form of it, and soon after published his last book, "The Bible, the Church, and the Reason," which is only the Inaugural over again in an aggravated form. And it is plain from the extended argument which he has made that he honestly holds the views expressed in these productions of his.

Dr. Briggs has spoken as the counsel of his client, but he has not put his client on the witness-stand. We have, therefore, no sworn or approbated testimony. He has put in evidence a large amount of documentary evidence in form of

articles and books extending back a number of years, and we must give to these the value of documentary evidence. In one of his earliest works he stated that the unity of Isaiah was to be maintained against the divisive critics who hold that the last part of that prophecy was written by the Great Unknown in the latter part of the Exile. He may have changed his mind on other points, and there is no harm in that, only it should be remembered.

It is not denied that Dr. Briggs has made many orthodox statements in the works which he has put in evidence. And it is not for these that he has been accused, but for utterances in the Inaugural which are believed to be heretical. And here let me say that we agree with Dr. Briggs that no one is to be condemned on mere inferences from statements he has made, unless they be necessary inferences.

If, for instance, one should state that a person had reached a certain place in one way, another one in a different way, and a third in a different way still, then, although he has not affirmed, in so many words, that there are three different ways of reaching that place, his statements necessarily involve that, and it would be childish to say that those who charged him with it had accused him on a mere inference.

But before passing to the consideration of his argument on the charges and specifications, it is necessary to give some attention to a number of preliminary questions on which Dr. Briggs has expressed himself.

The claim that the prosecution has disobeyed the order of the court respecting the transposition of texts and the extracts from the Standards, is based on a technicality so insignificant that any attempt to make capital out of it tends to provoke a smile. The specification must set forth the facts relied upon to prove the charge, and must declare, as far as possible, the time, place and circumstances. The quotations from Scripture and from the Standards are as much facts to prove the Charge as are the extracts from the Inaugural. The transfer of the texts and quotations with the preliminary statements, "These declarations are contrary to the Scripture



and Standards," respectively to a position in advance of the specifications, turns the charges and specifications into a bad form; that is all. If the defense and the court prefer them in that shape, the prosecution has had no recourse beyond that of taking an exception. But the transfer does not alter the case in any wise. The texts and the extracts from the Standards remain, as before, a part of the facts upon which the prosecution relies for proof of the charges, and the defendant in his argument has recognized them. Moreover, it should be remembered that the Bible and the Standards are in court both as law and evidence, and can be used as such by the prosecution to maintain the charges and specifications.

Equally without basis is the pretense that charges 4, 5 and 6 should be thrown out because neither Dr. Birch nor Mr. McCook discussed the evidence offered in support of them in their opening. The fact that these gentlemen did not discuss the evidence in detail, nor at great length, is wholly immaterial. They are not witnesses; they are advocates. The evidence is before you; it is presented with the amended charges and specifications; it has been discussed by Dr. Briggs as evidence, and his discussion must be discussed in turn by me.

Still more remarkable is the statement that the special feature of the charges is that the doctrines mentioned therein are essential, and Dr. Briggs maintains, respecting some of them, that they are not essential. Whether they are so or not may be more clearly seen after the arguments. But it is unnecessary to do more now than to call attention to his statement in order to show that it is not the important feature of the charge. However, the statement introduced a discussion of the whole question as to what may or may not be an essential doctrine; a discussion which introduced the consideration of some other matters relating to law and procedure, which should be considered prior to the general reply to Dr. Briggs's argument. For in his discussion were considered the methods whereby might be determined whether or not a doctrine in the Confession is essential, as well as the bearing of such deter-

mination upon the compact said to be made between Church and minister at the time of ordination.

Dr. Briggs's methods of determining whether or not any doctrines are essential are unquestionably ingenious, but they are his own, and therefore must be regarded merely as suggestions until he can induce the Church to revise the Standards so as to accept them. Possibly prior to such acceptance, some doctrines now mentioned only in the Confession and the Larger Catechism, might be placed also in the Shorter Catechism. Possibly also some clauses in the chapters of the Confession, which might be removed without injuring the sense, might be so linked that they could not be removed. There is no knowing what might have been, or what might be, had such methods been chosen in the beginning, or if they should be chosen in the future.

Let me remind this court that the word *essential* is not in our Standards, and was not brought into use in 1788, when they were adopted. The precedents cited by Dr. Briggs are valuable opinions, but they are no authority for us now. However, the meaning of the term *essential* is sufficiently well shown in the extract from John Blair, read by Dr. Briggs, in which it was shown that the term refers not to doctrines essential to salvation merely, but to those which are essential to the *system of doctrine and to the mode of government*, while the authority by whom the question as to essential or non-essential doctrines is to be decided is determined with equal clearness by the authorities read by Dr. Briggs. For in the act preliminary to the Adopting Act in 1729, the statement is made that if any minister of Synod or candidate for the ministry have scruples, he should declare them to the Presbytery and Synod, which should determine whether the doctrines, respecting which he had scruples, were essential and necessary.

The Plan of Reunion of the Synods in 1758 is equally explicit, for Term II. states (Baird, pp. 614-615): "That when any matter is determined by a majority vote, every member shall either actively concur with or passively submit to such



determination; or, if his conscience permit him to do neither, he shall, after sufficient liberty modestly to reason and remonstrate, peaceably withdraw from our communion, without attempting to make any schism, *provided always* that this shall be understood to extend only to such determinations as the *body* shall judge indispensable in doctrine or Presbyterian Government.

So, also, in the disposition of the Harker case of 1763, in which we find that the Synod decided that his principles "are contrary to the Word of God and the approved Standards of doctrine," and, after mature deliberation, suspended him from the ministry.\*

Following this line of precedents, the Form of Government gives to the General Assembly the power of deciding in all controversies respecting doctrine and discipline, the rights of both Church and minister being protected by the right of appeal from the lower to the higher judicatories.

It is not necessary then for the prosecution to prove by historical statements whether or not the doctrines alleged to have been assailed are, or are not, essential to the system. We must be guided by the Book of Discipline. It says, Sec. 3: "An offense is anything in the doctrine, principles or practice of a church member, officer or judicatory, which is contrary to the Word of God; or which, if it be not in its own nature sinful, may tempt others to sin, or mar their spiritual edification." It would seem from this that, according to our present Constitution, anything which contradicts Scripture or which may work harm to others, is essential enough to call for judicial process. Section 4 of the Book of Discipline shows in what way the offense is to be proved. It states: "Nothing shall, therefore, be the object of judicial process, which cannot be proved to be contrary to the Holy Scriptures, or to the regulations and practice of the Church founded thereon." It is necessary, therefore, for the prosecution only to present proof such as, on this alternate or double basis, shall satisfy

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\* Baird, p. 626.

this or an appellate court that the doctrines are essential; for the decision rests with the court. No man has the right to interpret the Standards to suit himself, and practically to revise them in case any doctrine appears unscriptural. Still less has he the right to assert that the system contained in the Confession requires that doctrines be sustained by "express language of Scripture," for the Confession accepts doctrines which can be fairly deduced from Scripture.

In this same connection was discussed the nature of the subscription to the Confession and what it means. The opinions of the Westminster divines, of the Scotch Church, or of the Irish Church, are wholly foreign to the matter. The meaning of subscription is made sufficiently clear in the authorities quoted by Dr. Briggs: the Preliminary Act of 1729, the Plan of Union of 1758, as well as by numerous authorities since; the Balch case of 1798 (Baird, 621), the Kentucky case of 1804-5 (Baird, 634), the Cumberland Schism case of 1811 (Baird, 644-5), the Craighead case of 1824 (Moore, 54). For all of these show that the minister's subscription to the Standards cannot be separated from his acceptance of the entire Bible, from his approval of the Government and Discipline of the Presbyterian Church, nor from the necessary promise of subjection to his brethren in the Lord.

### *SOURCE OF AUTHORITY.*

The first two charges relate to the sources of Divine Authority. In them Dr. Briggs is accused of teaching that, apart from the Holy Scripture, the Reason and the Church, as fountains of divine authority, may and do savingly enlighten men. That seems to be the obvious meaning of the citations from the Inaugural Address which we have appended to the charges. We contend that these statements of Dr. Briggs contradict the essential doctrine of Scripture and of our Standards, that the Holy Scripture alone can speak with divine authority on questions of salvation, and that it is the rule of faith and practice.



I would call your attention, to begin with, to the fact that Dr. Briggs has not answered the arguments of Dr. Birch and Mr. McCook. He contends that the specifications are irrelevant to sustain the charges, and that the citations from Scripture and the Standards do not prove them to be offenses. I shall try to show that he is mistaken in this view.

It is of the utmost importance that we get the question at issue clearly before our minds, and not allow it to be obscured by side issues.

It is not denied that God has left some evidence of Himself in the human reason; nor that it has a proper function to perform in determining the evidences on which the Divine Revelation is commended to us, and in interpreting that Revelation in accordance with the best attainable light. Nor is it contended that God has not given authority to his Church for purposes of instruction, discipline, edification and salvation.

Dr. Briggs's words mean nothing if they do not clothe the Reason and the Church with such a divine authority as empowers them to speak finally and with certainty on the great questions of salvation and life. He claims that he does not co-ordinate these fountains of divine authority, but it is also clear that he does not subordinate the Reason and the Church to the Scriptures. To say of anything that it is a fountain of divine authority which can give us certainty on divine things, is to state that the authority is infallible. It would, in fact, be no divine authority if it were not infallible. That Dr. Briggs uses the term "*divine*" in that definite sense, is clear from his own words at the beginning of his Inaugural Address. He there makes a careful distinction between fallible human and infallible Divine authority. He states: "What authority shall be our guide and comfort in life is a fundamental question for man at all times. . . . If we undertake to search the forms of authority that exist about us, they all disclose themselves as human and imperfect. . . . The earnest spirit presses back of all these human authorities in quest of an *infallible guide* and of an eternal and immutable certainty." *Probability*

might have been the guide of life in more superficial times, but in this earnest age men will be satisfied only with certainty. "Divine authority is the only authority to which man can yield implicit obedience, on which he can rest in loving certainty, and build with joyous confidence," and then adds: "There are historically three great fountains of divine authority—the Bible, the Church, and the Reason."\*

The Church and the Reason are fountains of divine authority, and, therefore, on his own definition, each of these can speak with "eternal and immutable certainty," can act as an "infallible guide" of life, and hence man can yield implicit obedience to each, and rest on each of them with loving certainty, and build with joyous confidence. It is not quite candid in Dr. Briggs, after having committed himself to the strict meaning of the word "divine," to state as he does in the Response to the Charges † and to repeat in his defense: "The Reason is a 'great fountain of divine authority,' and yet not an 'infallible rule of faith and practice.' The Church is a great fountain of divine authority, and yet not an 'infallible rule of faith and practice.' The Bible is 'a great fountain of divine authority,' and it is also 'the only infallible rule of faith and practice.'" This is simply quibbling, for, granting that Dr. Briggs does not say in so many words that the Church and the Reason give us a formal rule of faith and practice, what he does say amounts to the same thing.

He invests them with such divine authority that they can speak with "*eternal and immutable certainty*," can be to men infallible guides of conduct, and that we may yield them "implicit obedience." What more can any formal rule given by the Scriptures do? What is the difference between an *infallible guide* and an *infallible rule* in the matter of salvation?

In his Inaugural Address, Dr. Briggs distinctly affirms that divine authority is for men an "*infallible guide*" of life, so that "we can yield it implicit obedience, rest and build on it in lov-

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\* Inaugural Address, pp. 23, 24.

† Page 20.



ing certainty and with joyous confidence” ; and then immediately attributes that quality of divinity to the Reason, the Church, the Bible, precisely alike. The three are exactly alike in respect to their being fountains of divine authority.

It makes, however, but little difference whether you call this co-ordination or not. We are not engaged in a war of words. The meaning is too plain to be mistaken. Independently of the Bible, the Church and the Reason, as fountains of divine authority, are, according to Dr. Briggs, both sufficient and efficient, so that we can yield them implicit obedience and build on them with loving certainty and joyous confidence. Dr. Briggs affirms that multitudes have found the Church and the Reason amply sufficient to make them acquainted with God. In some instances this has been true where the Bible has been found to be inefficient. And it must be admitted that, in these cases, the Reason and the Church were superior to the Holy Scripture.

Dr. Briggs has developed his idea of the three fountains of divine authority sufficiently in statements to which attention is called in the specifications under these two charges, to leave no room for doubt as to his meaning. He there plainly teaches that the Bible fails to satisfy the religious wants of some people who, having tried it, and turning away from it in disappointment, find that satisfaction in the Church and the Reason respectively.

Newman could not find certainty and God in the Bible, “*striving never so hard*,” but found a place among the faithful through the institutions of the Church.\* Martineau could not find God in the Bible, but did find Him enthroned in his own soul,† and thus, simply under the guidance of Reason, he came to be a representative Christian every whit as good as evangelical Spurgeon. The expression, “finding God,” in the Address of Dr. Briggs, is a vague one, and it is difficult to determine its exact meaning. Martineau found the personality of God in

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\* Inaugural Address, p. 25.

† Inaugural Address, p. 27.

argumentation; and that was really not a christian, but a philosophical find. Evidently, however, Dr. Briggs regards it as a christian find. And he affirms that there are multitudes who have experiences similar to those of Newman and Martineau. He states that God makes himself known to men in different ways, and they "*are influenced by their temperaments and environments which of the three ways of access to God they may pursue.*"\* And if there are three ways of access to God which serve men equally well, then certainly the Bible is not the *only* rule of faith and practice; and, since we have just seen that Dr. Briggs makes each of the three sources an "infallible guide of life," it is also not the only *infallible* rule of faith and practice. This position of Dr. Briggs is made still more clear by a statement he makes in his response to the charges against him: "I affirm," he says, "both the sufficiency of the Scriptures, and the efficacy of the Scriptures when the Divine Spirit accompanies them; but this is not to affirm that in fact all those who *use the Scriptures as a means of approach to God*, do certainly find them efficient in their case, or that the Divine Spirit may not work effectually upon some men through the Church or the Reason." †

There can be no question that Dr. Briggs conceives of the Reason as being able to speak with certainty and final authority on the burning question of human salvation. For he says: "Here in the Holy of Holies of human nature God reveals himself to those who seek Him." ‡

"Unless God's authority is discerned in the forms of the Reason, there is no ground upon which any of the heathen could ever have been saved, for they know nothing of the Bible or Church. If they are not savingly enlightened by the light of the world in the forms of the Reason, the whole heathen world is forever lost." §

And if they can thus find God savingly through the Reason,

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\* Inaugural Address, p. 28.

† Response to the Charges, p. 20.

‡ Inaugural Address, p. 26.

§ Inaugural Address, pp. 88-89.



unaided by the revelation which God has given in the Scripture, then that revelation given in the written word is not necessary to salvation as our standards affirm.

It is in this position which Dr. Briggs has taken that he contravenes the biblical doctrine which our Church holds to be a cardinal one, and which assigns to the Scripture the place of sole and sovereign supremacy as the rule of faith and practice. It holds the Scripture to be "*most necessary.*"\*

The agency of the Holy Spirit is not involved here. We all admit the necessity of His gracious working. The Bible is not efficient without His life-giving energy; but with that energy it is efficient as nothing else can be; and we believe that He ever accompanies the word which He Himself inspired, in gracious power in those who are ready to hear.

Dr. Briggs's argument respecting the nature of Reason as a source of divine authority contained much of mere interest and more that was true. It was an eloquent defence of the Spirit's working in the heart of man—the christianized man. It was equally eloquent as a plea in behalf of the position that heathen may be saved without intervention of missionary or Bible knowledge. It was a clear presentation of proof that elect infants and incapables must be saved without Bible knowledge; but all of these matters are wholly outside of the matter at issue. We have nothing whatever to do here with any discussion respecting salvation of heathen, even though the Confession may point the way. We have no desire to obstruct it. Nor do we wish to dissent from his statements generally respecting saving faith, assurance of faith, prayer, and the rest—though we might ask the question: How do we learn of Jesus Christ so as to think of Him in our lonely hours? All that Dr. Briggs said on these subjects shows nothing more than that man, in order to be the subject of saving grace and have religious experiences, must have a rational and moral nature, and that the reason is one of the channels through

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\*Confession of Faith, chap. I. sec. 1.

which gracious influences come to his soul. The Confession shows that the Spirit works all these things through the Word. Nor do we care to discuss whether or not an organization refusing to acknowledge Christ's authoritative institution of the Eucharist is a Christian Church, though we might do so, since the command to observe the Eucharist was addressed no more to His immediate disciples than were the gracious promises quoted by Dr. Briggs. Nor do we care to discuss whether or not God rules a man when conscience rules, lest some might ask whose conscience is meant. Nor do we care to dwell upon Dr. Briggs's appeal to the obscure and antiquated Cambridge Platonists. We might as well point to the Shakers for authority in theology. We do wish to consider the question involved in Charge I., and we ask you to read it. You see that the charge is not that the Reason is a fountain of divine authority; that it does not involve the question of salvation of infants, incapables, or heathen; that it does not concern the gracious workings of the Holy Spirit in the heart of one already acquainted with the Word and interested in it; that it does not concern the working of the Spirit in the heart of one unacquainted with the Scripture, the Word of God; but that it does concern the working with the Reason of one who is acquainted with the Scripture and cannot find in it divine authority—that living certainty on which he may rest; that it does concern the working of the Spirit with the Reason of one who rejects the Scriptures as we understand them.

It is not our faith only but the common faith of the Christian world, based on the plain teaching of Scripture,\* that so far as adults are concerned, there is no salvation without the knowledge of Christ and faith in Him.† “How then shall they call on Him in whom they have not believed? and how shall they believe in Him of whom they have not heard? and how shall

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\* Romans x. 13-17; I Corinthians i. 18-24; I Thessalonians ii. 13; 2 Thessalonians ii. 13.

† Romans x. 14.



they hear without a preacher?" The Holy Spirit promotse their salvation through "*belief of the truth*" on their part. He gives living power to the Word of God, so that it "*effectually worketh in them that believe.*" He bears "*witness by and with the word* in our hearts." The Spirit works through the Word and not through Church and Reason apart from the Word.\*

This is not the doctrine of Protestants alone, but really of the whole of Christendom. For in Christendom no source of divine authority, of infallible truth and light and certainty, is recognized other than the Holy Scriptures of God. For even the corrupt Church of Rome seeks, through a perversion of Scripture, to justify the authority it wields. Christianity stands on the revealed Word of God. But this doctrine of the sovereign supremacy of the Scripture is certainly the *cardinal doctrine* of Evangelical Protestantism.

The Church is administered by fallible, erring men, and can never speak of itself with the certainty of divine authority. Dr. Briggs insisted that we fly in the face of the Confession, the Form of Government and the Book of Discipline unless we concede the Church to be a great fountain of Divine authority. But the Standards subordinate the Church to the Holy Scripture, and Christ has given no authority to His Church except that which is prescribed in the Scripture. And history gives abundant illustration of the fact that whenever the Church departs from the light of the Bible and administers the ordinances and sacraments of Christ in any other than a biblical way, then they become a source of error, corruption and superstition, instead of light, comfort and sanctification.

In fallen man the Reason is blind, and gropes in the dark. If Reason could speak with the certainty of divine authority, that certainly ought to be found in the great philosophies of India and Greece, confessedly the best known products of Reason. But there everything is doubt and uncertainty. Even if you take reason in the widest sense claimed for it by Dr. Briggs, you do not mend the matter. For the conscience, unless

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\* Confession of Faith, Chapter I., sec. 5.

set right by the light of divine truth, is not correct; the religious feelings are more changeable than the moon; the æsthetic sentiment is as capricious as April weather; and who will look to the metaphysical categories in the joyous confidence of finding divine authority? Seriously, what does Dr. Briggs mean by the metaphysical categories respecting the reason being a great fountain of divine authority? The categories in philosophy are logical and not metaphysical. Aristotle gives the following list of categories in his Organon: *substance, quantity, quality, relation, place, time, position, possession, action, and passion*. Kant, in his Analytic gives the following categories as forms of the understanding: *unity, plurality, totality, reality, negation, limitation, substance and accident, cause and effect, community and reciprocity, actuality, possibility and necessity*. Is there not something ridiculous in the idea that these formal concepts help to make the reason a great fountain of divine authority? Dr. Briggs discoursed very eloquently about the light of the Logos coming to the reason of the heathen, and by the help of conscience, the religious feeling and these categories, leading them to a saving knowledge of God. But where are the heathen who are thus enlightened? Christian missionaries go to heathen lands, and almost without exception find the heathen firmly opposed to the Christ of the Gospel. Is the light of this Logos, by which the heathen are savingly enlightened in the forms of the reason, hostile to Jesus Christ, the Saviour of man? The Bible says that, when the true Logos came, it was to a world blind in the darkness of sin. His life was the light of men. "And the light shineth in darkness, and the darkness comprehended it not." (John 1: 4, 5.) It was necessary that there should be witness borne to the light, that all men through Him might be saved. The Apostle Paul was sent as a preacher to the heathen world where people had the reason together with the conscience, the religious feelings and the categories, and yet he affirmed of them that they were without God, without Christ, without strength and hope, and in darkness and under the power of Satan. When Christ called the Apostle to His service He said to him



that He would send him to the Gentiles, who were also not wanting in conscience and the religious feelings, for this purpose: "To open their eyes, and to turn them from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan to God, that they may receive forgiveness of sins, and inheritance among them which are sanctified by faith that is in me." (Acts 26: 18.) Evidently Christ and the Apostles, whatever may be possible in regard to the salvation of exceptional cases among the heathen, differed from Dr. Briggs in their view of the reason of the heathen with their conscience, religious feelings and metaphysical categories. The truth is, that to sinful man, neither the Church nor the Reason can speak with the certainty of divine authority without the light and help which come from the Divine Spirit speaking in and through the Word of God.

The Holy Scripture teaches it to be a part of the divine wisdom that, since the world by wisdom, through the forms of the reason, was unable to know God, to save men through the preaching of His Word. "For, after that in the wisdom of God, the world by wisdom knew not God, it pleased God by the foolishness of preaching to save them that believe."\*

Because of the insufficiency, the inefficiency and the errancy of both Church and Reason, it became necessary for God to embody His truth and will in the written Scripture, that we might have certainty and be safely led. Both Reason and Church, without the Scripture, have always grossly erred; and so perverted and blind is the human heart that, even with the help of God's Holy Word, they have again and again sadly stumbled.

Nor is it any reply to this to say that the Church existed before the Bible. For at that time God revealed His will directly to His people by means of His prophets. The Word of God has always been the one source of authority, the only fountain of light and truth for the Church.

This view is confirmed by Dr. Briggs's own illustration. He:

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\* 1 Cor. i. 21.

points to Martineau, for instance, from whom he quoted, as one who found God and certainty through the Reason. But are we so sure about that? There is an abundance of proof that Martineau's reason was sadly in error. For, in the last book from his pen, he states:

“ The blight of birth-sin, with its involuntary perdition; the scheme of expiatory redemption, with its vicarious salvation; the incarnation, with its low postulates of God and man, and its unworkable doctrine of two natures in one person, the official transmission of grace through material elements in the keeping of a consecrated corporation; the second coming of Christ to summon the dead and part the sheep from the goats at the general judgment—all are the growth of a mythical literature, or Messianic dream, or Pharisaic theology, or sacramental superstition, or popular apotheosis.”\* Is the Reason which thus discredits and sneers at some of the most precious doctrines of divine grace, a reliable fountain of divine authority?

It is well known that Martineau denies the divinity of Christ, and, as shown by the above quotation, rejects Him as a Saviour. His reason leads him to this treatment of Christ. Yet Dr. Briggs affirms that by means of this reason he found God enthroned in his own soul, and calls him a representative Christian, notwithstanding the fact that Christ himself has most solemnly stated, “ *No man can come to the Father but by Me.*”†

And we have cited Matt. xiii. 32–33, and Gal. i. 9, to show that the Scripture does not encourage us to believe and teach that those who thus treat Christ and His Word are subjects of saving grace. Sections 5 and 6 of the first chapter of the Confession were referred to in this connection to prove that if men yield to the Holy Spirit they will find light and salvation and certainty in the Holy Scriptures.

As a fountain or source of divine authority in matters of faith and life, the Scripture stands absolutely alone in the world; and

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\* Seat of Authority in Religion, page 650.

† John xiv. 6.



that for the reason that it is the *Word of God*—God Himself, speaking in and through it to men, giving them an expression of His will, His loving purposes and His gracious designs toward them, just as Christ, the living Word, is the expression, the manifestation to us, of the mind and character of the living and true God.

The Bible occupies this unique position of sole supremacy as an infallible standard of divine authority, since it alone gives us *ultimate truth*, truth which solves the burning questions that agitate the human soul, and on which, therefore, we can rest with loving certainty and build with joyous confidence.

The Scripture alone gives us a satisfactory account of the creation of the world and the end for which God made it; it alone gives us a sufficient knowledge of the Being, Character and Attributes of God, and of His relation to us as Creator, King, Judge, Saviour and Father; it alone interprets for us, in a true and comforting way, the mysteries of Divine Providence; it alone gives us a reasonable account of the holy origin, the sinful condition, the exalted character and the true destiny of man; it alone deals fully and efficiently with the great issues of sin and salvation, of duty and privilege, of life, death and immortality.

And because it only contains these great truths, the Scripture is the *only* source of divine authority to sinful men, which can speak to them infallibly on all questions of belief and life, and on which only they can securely and safely trust. And therefore it is that the Spirit bears witness “by and with the word” *only*, in our hearts.

It is absurd to place the Reason and the Church, in any sense, in juxtaposition with the Scripture. For, whatever might be true in a sinless race of beings, they have no sure oracle to pronounce to sinful men on any of the great questions to which I have referred. But the Scripture claims for itself sole supremacy as an infallible guide in faith and duty, always speaking with the positiveness of divine authority, and never in the faltering and apologetic tones which Reason and the Church are compelled to use.

It claims to extend in breadth and reach far beyond the highest attainment of human perfection ;—\* it declares that those who are plunged in distress through the evils of necromancy, will seek light by rallying to the cry, “To the Law and to the Testimony,” assuming that a right-minded, rational people, possessed of that fear of God which is the beginning and also the end of wisdom, will ask in their darkness, *What does God say?*† This is a better rendering of the Hebrew than the fanciful interpretation of Dr. Briggs. It declares that when men come to shame and confusion it is because in their foolishness they have rejected the Word of God, there being no wisdom in them;‡ and that if an erring people had but attended to the divine Word, “they should have turned them from their evil way, and from the evil of their doing.”§

In every case the written word is all-sufficient.

And I desire particularly to call the attention of my brethren to two things which are made plain in the New Testament.

*One is that*, with Christ, the Scripture (which then consisted only of the Old Testament) was in every case an ultimate and final authority. He never assigns any divine authority whatever to the Church and Reason aside from Scripture, but brings both Reason and Church invariably to the bar of Scripture. In his view, *what the Holy Scripture says, God says*. He met every form of opposition and temptation, and solved all difficulties by a simple and direct appeal to the Word of God written. And this is true of small bits of Scripture, single sentences. He invariably invested them with such ultimate and final divine authority that a mere reference to them ended the matter. “*It is written*” was ever with the Saviour a sufficient and final answer. And the fact that that terse expression occurs twenty-five times in the Gospel of Matthew alone, leads us to see how frequently it was on the lips of Christ. But the fact that Jesus treated the Scripture alone as an ultimate and

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\* Psalm cxix. 96.

† Isaiah viii. 20.

‡ Jeremiah viii. 8, 9.

§ Jeremiah xxiii. 22.



final authority, binding on faith and conscience, crops out in various other ways in the Gospel. He showed the leaders of the Church to be astray for the reason that they had made the Word of God of none effect.\* He convinced the rationalistic Sadducees of error because they were ignorant of the Scripture.† And He accused the Jews of being perverted by sin and prejudice in not receiving Him, since by searching the Scriptures, which testified of Him, they might assure themselves of His claims.‡

*The other is*, that the Apostles, following in the footsteps of the Master, also made the Scriptures the ultimate and final standard of appeal for authority in their preaching. They reasoned out of the Scripture, enforced the claims of the Gospel by argument from Scripture, and set their hearers to search the Scripture to ascertain whether the things which they proclaimed were true or not. An appeal to Scripture was always final with the Apostles, and, in that sense, they never appealed to either Church or Reason. For instance, when Paul had stated: "The Scripture hath concluded all under sin," that settled the matter on that point, since it was the voice of God speaking in Scripture.

Let any one study carefully the third chapter of Galatians, and almost any chapter from Hebrews, and he cannot fail to see that the Apostles considered any citation from Scripture, however brief, as clothed with the authority of God, which must not be questioned, but should be implicitly believed and followed in life.

On the authority, then, of both Christ and His Apostles, the Scripture alone is a sufficient, infallible, and safe fountain of divine authority. It is the final and only standard of appeal. And if that was true of the Old Testament Scripture it holds good with increased force in regard to the New. It was written that we might "know the certainty" of divine truth. It is

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\* Mark vii. 7-13.

† Matthew xxii. 29.

‡ John v. 39, 40.

the final part of the testimony which God gave of His Son, not to believe which is to charge God, Himself, with lying, and this thought is made particularly strong in 1 John v. 10, because the witness of the Spirit in the believer's heart is contrasted with the objective testimony which God has given concerning His Son, either orally or in the written word. Dr. Briggs arbitrarily assigns a subjective meaning to the word *witness* in both sentences of this verse. It is expressly stated that in the last sentence it has reference to the unbeliever. And the testimony of God concerning His Son to the unbeliever is objective in the Scripture or spoken word, while on the other hand in the case of the believer, it is subjective, in the heart, "by and with the word." Dr. Huther, in Meyer's Commentary, states, that this testimony of God "is the record which He has given (as a permanent record) of his Son." He who does not believe in that makes God to be a liar. The entire Scriptures are the oracles, the true sayings, the utterances or words of God, according to which, he who will teach in the Church of God, should speak.

And because the Scriptures hold this unique position, our standards declare that they were given by the immediate inspiration of God, and as such are "the Word of God written," most necessary for guidance and as a standard of final appeal in all matters of doctrine and life. "The Word of God which is contained in the Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments, is the only rule to direct us how we may glorify and enjoy Him." \* Quite in harmony with this vital doctrine of Holy Scripture, our Confession declares that Scripture to be the Supreme Judge, as the voice of the Holy Spirit, by which all controversies in religion are to be judged, to the test of which all decrees and opinions are to be brought, and in whose sentence alone we are to rest, and is thus *most necessary*.

In setting up Reason and the Church as foundations of divine authority, which give certainty, in addition to the Bible, Dr. Briggs contradicts this vital doctrine. He surrenders the noble

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\* Shorter Catechism Answer to 2d Question.



position of evangelical Protestantism, for which the Presbyterian Church has so long contended with all her strength against the claims of rationalists and a sacerdotal church.

This position, which leads Dr. Briggs to welcome rationalists to the household of the faithful, and according to which Martineau is as good a christian as Spurgeon, is entirely at variance with Presbyterian faith and life. If rationalists, like Martineau, who reject the Bible as the Word of God, and with it all the distinctive doctrines of saving grace, are to be considered good representative christians, then we may as well close our Theological Seminaries and churches and disband our Boards of Home and Foreign Missions, and devote ourselves to any other calling in which we may be able to glorify God and serve our fellow-men. They involve a superfluous expenditure, and practical men will not be slow in reaching that conclusion.

This teaching of Dr. Briggs will also mislead the people in that it will encourage them to look for the waters of salvation to broken cisterns which cannot hold them, and ought therefore to be condemned by this court of the Church of Christ.

### *INSPIRATION.*

The third charge has reference to the subject of inspiration. In it Dr. Briggs is accused of teaching that there are errors in the original text of the Holy Scripture as it came from its inspired authors, and thus contradicts the essential doctrine of that Scripture and of the Standards of our Church that the Holy Scripture is the Word of God written, immediately inspired and the rule of faith and practice.

In what Dr. Briggs said on this charge, he really made no attempt to answer the arguments of the prosecution, but directed his discourse to a different end. He maintains that those who oppose his views on this point have their judgments warped by an ironclad dogma of verbal inspiration, that his teaching is not contrary to the doctrines indicated, and that

his view of inspiration is in harmony with both the Scripture and the Standards. But the mere assertion of Dr. Briggs that the offense charged is not in contravention of essential doctrine, cannot now be received as proof any more than the unproved affirmation of the prosecution can be so received.

I have spoken to this point already, but it is so important that it must be referred to here again.

Dr. Briggs makes the following statement:\*

“Your attention is again called to the principle established in the introduction to my defence. I showed you that it was not sufficient that a doctrine should be essential and necessary in your opinion. It must be essential and necessary to the Westminster system. It is not enough that you, or certain dogmatic teachers, or the General Assembly by a majority vote, should declare a certain doctrine to be inconsistent with an essential doctrine of the Westminster Confession. It must be shown that it is really inconsistent with the Westminster system itself. You cannot insist that your deductions and reasoning should be accepted by me, if I hold the opinion that your reasonings and deductions are false. If I can hold the two doctrines without regarding them as inconsistent, you cannot make them inconsistent to me. You may exact of me that I shall be faithful to the doctrine of the true and full inspiration of the Word of God written. But you cannot exact of me that I shall say there are no errors in Holy Scripture—for the reason that the Confession does not assert this, and I am not bound to your views of consistency or inconsistency, but only to the Confession and to my own judgment. If the prosecution had claimed and had tried to prove that the Confession teaches as an essential doctrine attested by Holy Scripture that there are no errors in Holy Scripture, then it would have been easy to test every such citation and show that no such teaching can be found.”

The principle which, according to Dr. Briggs, underlies his

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\* Defence of Professor Briggs, p. 87.



own defence, if interpreted as he interprets it, is an erroneous principle.

What if a man were to teach Pantheism, and when charged with contradicting the Westminster Standards were to say: "I hold Pantheism, but I subscribe to, and I believe the doctrine of God contained in the Standards; you might convict me, if you could point out any section in the Confession which teaches that Pantheism is not a true interpretation of the doctrine of God? But you have no right to insist that I shall cease to teach Pantheism, for the reason that the Confession does not forbid it. If I can hold Pantheism and the doctrine of God taught in the Confession, without regarding them as inconsistent, you can not make them inconsistent to me." You might say: "No man could be so unreasonable, so thoroughly illogical as that." But if it were to happen, you might well regard a judicial process as necessary, and the courts of the Church would then be called upon to decide whether the two doctrines were consistent doctrines. In the passage from Dr. Briggs's Defence, quoted above, he denies that a church court, at least that this court, has a right to determine whether he can hold certain doctrines and consistently subscribe to the Presbyterian Standards. He claims that it is his own right to determine whether his doctrines conflict with essential and vital doctrines of the Standards. It seems impossible that he should have fallen into such an error.

Let it be admitted that in the opinion of the defendant the doctrines which he has taught are not inconsistent with essential doctrines of the Standards; but that they are considered essential by the committee which represents the Presbyterian Church. How shall the question be settled? It is to be settled judicially. It is to settle questions of just this kind that trials like this are instituted. It is for the courts, and for the courts alone, to decide whether such divergences are vital. The committee has argued that the divergence is vital; Dr. Briggs holds that it is not vital. He can not say that this court has no right to determine the consistency of his doctrines with the standards.

The Craighead case does *not justify* you as a court, as I have shown, in permitting an accused person to be the judge of his own errors. And besides this, there are certain great principles of theology which imply inevitable and necessary inferences. When, for example, Dr. Briggs argues, as he does, that the doctrine of the sovereign free action of the Spirit of God involves the further doctrine that heathen who have never known about Jesus Christ are saved, he makes an inference of the very kind against which, in the passage cited above, he complains. The inference is contradictory of other parts of the Confession, but it is none the less a deduction, such as he claims the committee has no right to make with respect to the doctrine of the Infallibility of Holy Scripture. As in the case of the illustration which I have given above, it might be held by a committee of prosecution that the confessional doctrine of God was inconsistent with Pantheism, although nothing is said about Pantheism in the Confession itself; so in the present case, it is for this court to decide whether the great principle of the Presbyterian Church, that the Holy Scriptures, the Word of God written, are immediately inspired of God and are infallible, is consistent with a denial of their historical accuracy, and their freedom from error. It is not enough to create, as Dr. Briggs has done, a kind of limbo and consign to it, under the name of traditionalism, whatever he may condemn on the authority of certain opinions of men who, in many cases, have no authority in the Presbyterian Church. The natural and necessary inferences from the confessional doctrine of Scripture, make it impossible for the accused to throw upon the committee the burden of proving his inconsistency. This court is called upon to decide the very question which the accused claims he alone can decide for himself. Otherwise his plea of not guilty is sufficient without the presentation of evidence or argument.

The question is fairly before us for settlement. And in order to arrive at a just conclusion we must candidly compare the teaching of the Scripture and the Standards on this subject with that of Dr. Briggs.



But before proceeding to consider these questions I will dispose of one matter to which Dr. Briggs has alluded. It is the accusation he made against the General Assembly.

In regard to this I will only say that the Assembly in its deliverance, following numerous precedents, declared only what has always been the belief not only of Presbyterians, but of all evangelical Christians, and in doing so acted clearly within its constitutional power, for, according to our form of Government, chapter 12, section 5, it is the duty of the Assembly to bear "testimony against error in doctrine." Dr. Briggs cites John Wallis as a better interpreter of the Confession than the General Assembly, but he neglects to notice that Wallis and the Assembly do not differ on this point, for the former does not charge that there is error in the Scripture.

We are not raising any question as to the mode of inspiration, but confine ourselves to the *product* of inspiration in the written Word.

Our Standards affirm of the Scriptures, that God Himself committed them to writing, that all the canonical books "are given by inspiration of God," and that, as such, they constitute the "Word of God written," to which is to be ascribed, "entire perfection" and "infallible truth."\*

This is the Christian doctrine of inspiration of which that catholic and philosophic scholar, Prof. Henry B. Smith, has given the following liberal definition:

"Inspiration is that divine influence by virtue of which the truths and facts given by revelation, as well as other truths and facts pertaining to God's Kingdom, are spoken or written in a truthful and authoritative manner." † It "gives us a book properly called the Word of God, inspired in all its parts. The inspiration is plenary in the sense of extending to all the parts, and of extending also to the words." ‡ In a sermon on inspiration which Dr. Smith preached before the Synod of New York and New Jersey in 1855, he said: "The

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\* Confession of Faith, Chapter I., sections 1, 2, 5.

† Introduction to Christian Theology, p. 204.

‡ Introduction to Christian Theology, p. 209.

divine influence which is its source extends to and pervades the whole contents of the Scriptures, both historical and doctrinal; it includes the whole of the strict divine revelations, and also whatever the sacred writers related as historians and witnesses. Inspiration is the organizing principle of the whole Bible, just as the principle of life is the organizing energy in every bodily frame, extending to all its parts, even those seemingly most insignificant." \*

"Its object is the communication of truth in an infallible manner, so that, when rightly interpreted, no error is conveyed." "The *inspiration of the Bible involves its infallibility*. Interpreted, as all works must be, by its real spirit, it *gives us truth without error*. Light and life come from the ministry of the Word." †

I have made these extended quotations from Dr. Henry B. Smith's writings, for the double reason that his broad and progressive spirit is acknowledged by all, and further, that he has given us a fair statement of this Christian doctrine as it has always been substantially held in all parts of the living Church of Christ.

The majority of Presbyterians undoubtedly hold to the theory of verbal inspiration, repudiating, however, the idea of mechanical dictation; while others accept, with Dr. Smith, the plenary theory. Both theories are acknowledged as orthodox in the Presbyterian Church, and there is, in fact, no essential difference between the two, as Dr. Smith's definition conclusively shows.

But it is impossible to include the views advanced by Dr. Briggs under either theory. They are destructive of the very idea of inspiration.

To begin with, we observe that Dr. Briggs exchanges the current statement, "The Scriptures *are* the Word of God," for "The Scriptures *contain* the Word of God," which he declares to be the true doctrine, meaning thereby not the entire con-

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\* Sermon on Inspiration.

† Sermon on Inspiration.



tents of the Bible from cover to cover, but only some parts of it.\* The Scriptures contain the Word of God, but they contain also something besides that. And he insists that this is the meaning of our confessional statement. But he forgets, as Dr. Warfield has shown, "that the old Protestant distinction between the Word of God and the Scriptures made the Word of God the broader term, inclusive not only of the Scriptures (which it were far from doubting to *be* a *part* of the Word of God), but also of all that God had spoken to the fathers by the prophets, and, in these last days, by His Son; while the modern distinction makes the Scriptures the broader word, within which is to be found much besides the Word of God. Hence, the statement in the *Shorter Catechism* answer, that "the Word of God, which is contained in the Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments is the only rule to direct us how we may glorify and enjoy Him," the phrase, "which is contained in the Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments," is a definition of the "Word of God" which is our only rule, and is meant to distinguish it from that asserted Word of God contained in the ecclesiastical tradition of the Romanists and the new revelations of the sectaries; and that therefore the statement is far from throwing doubt on the confessional assertion that the Scriptures *are* the "Word of God written," but is rather a repetition of it. † According to Prof. Henry B. Smith, this view of Dr. Briggs was held by the Arminians and Socinians of the seventeenth century, and is now the position of German Rationalism, which has infected the whole German theology. ‡ To what extent the contents of Scripture are not the Word of God, we may be able to determine further on.

The strange thing in Dr. Briggs's view of inspiration is, that it admits of errors in the original Scriptures.

Prof. Briggs affirms that the number of errors in the Bible is very great, and that to say that they were not in the original

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\* Presbyterian Review, 1884, p. 381. The Bible, the Church and the Reason, p. 99.

† Presbyterian and Reformed Review, 1892, pp. 375, 376.

‡ Sermon on Inspiration.

text is sheer assumption, on which no mind can rest with certainty. It is a ghost of modern evangelicalism which the creeds of the Church do not sanction, and which the Bible itself does not teach.\*

He makes two statements on this subject, which give the largest possible room for the entrance of error into the composition of Scripture.

The first is, that the errors occur in "the circumstantials" of Scripture, in the non-essential parts, in the "human settings" which hold "the precious jewel," in that section of the Bible that theologians commonly account for from the providential superintendence of the mind of the author.†

It is worthy of note here that, according to the teachings of Dr. Briggs, there are portions of the Bible which are non-essential, circumstantial, human settings, and have no further guarantee of divine authority than a general providential superintendence. He does not tell us to what extent these elements pervade the contents of Scripture. But when we call to mind that Dr. Briggs includes under this class of Scripture some of its history, the narration of facts and incidents and personal experience, geography, science, and those parts to which he ascribes the character of fiction and legend, ‡ we have a very large part of Scripture which has become untrustworthy, owing to the possible presence of errors in it, and which, therefore, cannot be an infallible rule of belief and duty.

In regard to the composition of this portion of Scripture, Dr. Briggs states:

"It may be that this providential superintendence gives infallible guidance in every particular; and it may be that it differs but little, if at all, from the providential superintendence of the fathers and schoolmen and theologians of the Christian Church." § The writers of some of this por-

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\* Inaugural Address, p. 35.

† Inaugural Address, p. 35.

‡ Biblical History, pp. 22, 23, 25, 30; Biblical Study, p. 232; The Congregationalist, Feb. 21, 1889.

§ Inaugural Address, p. 35.



tion of Scripture have a divine way of historical composition. They bring God nearer to us, encompass us with heavenly influence, and make us sensible of the touch of God."\*

But this is not inspiration at all. Dr. Henry B. Smith called this theory a "perversion of terms, and a resort to vague generalities which seem profound because they are somewhat uncommon. Almost any one of moderate capacity, after a few easy lessons, can talk glibly in such a style."† And then he goes on to say that "this is, in fact, a heathen rather than a Christian mode of speech; Cicero long ago said, 'In every man there is a divine afflatus.'" Almost any good writer or speaker, with the fire of truth in his heart, can encompass us with heavenly influence and make us sensible to the touch of God.

This idea of a separation between the essentials and circumstantials, between the human setting and the precious jewel of truth, is utterly impossible. Great and important doctrines are vitally bound up with the incidental narration of personal and historic facts, and the two stand or fall together.

On this point Dr. Henry B. Smith said:

"All, even the most insignificant portions of the original Scriptures, have their life from the Spirit, even as the principle of life embraces the hairs of the head, as well as the beating of the heart. All is shaped by the wise builder into one glorious temple, which speaks of Him from the foundation to the topmost stone." "Even the most trivial personal details may serve an important office, such as inspiration could not neglect, in verifying the authorship and proving the authenticity of epistles and prophecies."‡

The cloak of Paul, Elijah's mantle, and the little wine commended to Timothy, help to prove the genuineness of the biblical writings. "Genealogies instruct in the truth of the Messiahship." "The fact of the death of Christ contains the truth of the atonement; it is that truth." "It is in vain," says

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\* Biblical History, p. 30.

† Sermon on Inspiration.

‡ Sermon on Inspiration.

Dr. Smith, "to try to limit inspiration to doctrine and truth, excluding history from its sphere. The attempt is as unphilosophical as it is unscriptural." \* That is sound speech.

The same position has been maintained by all the great divines of the Evangelical Church. It is certainly the faith of Presbyterians, and this idea of an extensive field of erroneous circumstantials in the Bible—the exact demarcation of which no one is able to determine—is wholly subversive of that faith, an idea against which our Church claims the right to protect itself. It robs the Bible of its infallibility.

The other postulate of Dr. Briggs in regard to the Scriptures, which makes way for the entrance of errors, has reference to Scriptural language and expression. And this is by far the more serious of the two, since it necessarily leads to the most destructive inferences, and a teacher of religion must be held responsible for inferences which will be necessarily drawn from his propositions, although in this case the proposition itself is heretical enough to merit our condemnation.

Says Dr. Briggs:

"There is nothing divine in the text—in its letters, words, or clauses." "Language is rather the dress of thought." "The divine authority is not in the style or in the words, but in the concept." "We force our way through the language and the letter, the grammar and the style, to the inner substance of the thought, for here, *if at all*, we shall find God." †

Inspiration and divine authority do not extend to the print, the text, the letters, the words, the clauses, the style, and the grammar; that is, *the entire visible text*, all that you can see of the Bible with your eyes, from the beginning of Genesis to the end of Revelation. This is not divinely inspired; it is but the human form or setting, which, in some way, holds the substance of the divine thought or concept. The concept only is

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\* Sermon on Inspiration.

† Inaugural Address, pp. 30, 31, 32.



inspired. Now, I have not the slightest desire to do Dr. Briggs an injustice by way of misstating his position. He complains that his brethren do not understand him; and I think that is partly true, for many of his brethren think him far more orthodox on this point than he really is. "I will give his view in his own words."

In the *Presbyterian Review* he states that, "in the higher and more distinctively religious meaning of the word, it is not the biblical books throughout—it is only the Word of God which is in the biblical books—that can be spoken of as *inspired*." They are the "formal envelope" enclosing the "living divine organism of truth." He affirms that "the *absolute* divine truth in the Bible must be discriminated from the relative truths in which it is enveloped, or, in other words, the divine substance has been given in human forms, and no one will truly understand the Bible until he has learned to distinguish between this temporal, circumstantial and variable form, from the eternal, essential and permanent substance."\* And if that be the case, then the great mass of mankind will never understand the Bible, since they will not be able to make that distinction. No scholars, Dr. Briggs included, have as yet been able to trace that dividing line. In *Biblical Study* he expresses himself on this subject in the following words :

"We cannot, in the symbolical or historical use of the term, call this providential care of His Word, or superintendence over its *external production*, inspiration. Such providential superintendence is not different in kind with regard to the Word of God, the visible Church of God, or the forms of the sacraments." †

There has been, then, according to Dr. Briggs, no *definite divine influence* at work in the *production* of the Written Word.

Quite in harmony with this line of reasoning, Dr. Briggs, about two years ago, in his book "Whither?" charged the

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\* *Presbyterian Review*, 1884, pp. 384, 385.

† *Biblical Study*, p. 161.

Christian world with the fault of building their faith on a book, on the "authority of the external word of the letter of Scripture, instead of the living God and Saviour" (p. 282). That charge would be entirely meaningless if God were, in any true sense, the author of what is written in the book.

Still more recently he stated: "These human features render it improbable that the Bible should be free from errors in its human setting. The psychology may be crude, the methods of reasoning sometimes inexact, the rhetoric occasionally extravagant, the language of some of the writers rude, their conceptions provincial, their knowledge of the earth defective. But how could it be otherwise if the divine revelation was to come through such men as the ancient times were capable of producing? Holy Scripture does not claim inerrancy in its human setting, and it does not in fact possess it." \*

"The Evangelist seems to have overlooked the fact that one of these passages is from Malachi 3: 1. Here are two slips of memory on the part of the Evangelist, such as any writer is liable to make." †

This, then, is the matured conviction of Dr. Briggs. It is what he teaches and means to teach. The entire text of the Bible, from cover to cover, is but external form, the circumstantial human setting. It is of human production, and not inspired of God. The concept, thought or substance back of the visible text, alone is inspired; in order to find that, we must force our way through the language, style and grammar. In no other way shall we find God.

You may determine the exact historico-grammatical sense of a passage of Scripture, and you cannot then say, this is now the Word of God. It is only the word of man, who has had revealed to him the substance of divine truth which in his own way he has tried to express in writing. The preacher cannot say of any text, from which he may discourse to the people,

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\* The Bible, the Church, and the Reason, p. 108.

† The Bible, the Church, and the Reason, p. 109.



“Thus saith the Lord.” It is only man’s putting of God’s truth.

I will not raise any question here as to the possibility of conveying to the mind of man divine truth in the way of concepts not expressed in the terms of language. To most people it will occur that, inasmuch as infallible truth must be definite truth, such truth cannot be grasped by the human mind except in the definite forms of speech. How could the prophet know that he had a message from God, except it were given him in definite terms? But be that as it may. It is a philosophical question in dispute which we need not touch here.

We will take for granted, for argument’s sake, that God did communicate the substance of the truth of Divine Revelation to the writers of the Bible in the way of unformed concepts, which, under His general Providence, He allowed them to work into the Scriptures by their own power and wisdom in the form of history, biography, dogmatic statements, fiction, drama, legend or poetry, such as might be most congenial to their natures and habits of mind.

The biblical books are thus, strictly speaking, the products of human genius. The written Bible is the human setting which holds, in various proportions, the jewel of divine truth.

It does not therefore differ essentially from the books of other good men. They all express some divine truth. A person reading even such a book as “Whither?” may become conscious of the presence of a divine concept struggling to don its dress.

The only way in which, on this theory, the Bible can differ from other good books, is, that it may give us divine truth in a greater degree, since the writers of it received a direct revelation from God of the substance of divine truth. But we could never be altogether certain of that.

Let me call the attention of my brethren here to the fact that, on this point, Dr. Briggs squarely contradicts the biblical doctrine as set forth in our Standards. That makes *God to be the Author of the written word.*

A few words should here be said on the confessional doctrine of inspiration and the canon. In chapter I. section 1, it is stated, that for the better preserving and propagating of the truth, etc., God committed His revelation of Himself “wholly unto writing.” Dr. Briggs did not give the true statement of this section when he said that all that was wholly committed to writing was “the knowledge of God, and of His will, which is necessary unto salvation.” The Confession does not say that, and those who wrote it certainly did not mean to state that; for, as I will show directly, the controlling divines of the Westminster Assembly believed that the whole Bible, from the beginning of Genesis to the end of Revelation, was written by the verbal dictation of the Holy Spirit. Hence they stated God committed the same wholly unto writing. Naturally, therefore, they declare in the second section that the 66 books of the Holy Scripture are the Word of God written. Inspiration was God’s method of committing them to writing, and this is in section 8 declared to be *immediate* in the Hebrew and Greek languages. In the third section the Scripture is fenced off from human writings. And in the fourth it is affirmed that the authority of the Holy Scripture depends not on the testimony of any man, but wholly upon the God of truth, the Author thereof, and is to be received for the reason that it is the Word of God, or, as it is stated in the Larger Catechism: “4. The very Word of God.” And it is plain, from what I have already said, that by this the authors of the Confession meant the entire written Word.

Dr. Briggs’s subjective test of the canonicity of Scripture is not that of the Confession, for the Confession establishes the canon on objective testimony, and makes the saving energy and authority of Scripture to depend on the witness of the Spirit in the heart by and with the Word, according to section 5. John Ball,\* whom Dr. Briggs has cited, and some of whose writings form a large and important part of the Westminster Standards, makes it very clear in what way they established the canon of Scripture. In his short treatise he says:

Q. How may it be proved that those books are the Word of God immediately inspired by the Holy Ghost to the Prophets and Apostles?

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\* See Mitchell. The Westminster Assembly, pp. 377, 403, 419.



A. First, *By testimony of the Church*; secondly, *Constancy of the saints*; thirdly, *Miracles wrought to confirm the truth*; and fourthly, *By the antiquity thereof*.

The error of Dr. Briggs begins with limiting inspiration to the communication of truth to the prophets by the Lord, or to revelation in the strict sense. He denies it in respect to the written word.

God revealed truth to many men like Enoch, Noah, Abraham and Elijah, whom, so far as we know, He never inspired to write the divine word.

Inspiration takes revelation for granted; and, as connected with it, has reference to that divine action on the mind of man, which assures the right communication of it to others in language. It also assures the truthful communication of everything which God desires to communicate to mankind. "All Scripture is given by inspiration of God," but not all Scripture is revelation, in the strict sense.

Inspiration has for its object both the writers and their writings, but its one ultimate and objective point is *the writing, the Scripture*, for if it had stopped short of that in the writer, it would have missed its end entirely.

For if the Divine Spirit, who imparted the revelation to the prophets in completeness and without mistake, did not also guard the act by which it was recorded with the same care, then "it perished as such, with the men to whom it was imparted, and all that the world has is the fallible impression it made on their minds, or their fallible account of that impression." \*

Inspiration is a *special divine* influence, acting not only *on* man, but *through* him, for the production of a Scripture of infallible truth.

Dr. Henry B. Smith affirms that it extends to both the matter and form of the Bible; the matter in the form in which it is conveyed and set forth. † It extends to the language, for

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\* The Bible Doctrine of Inspiration, p. 97.

† Sermon on Inspiration.

“holy men of God spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost.” It is impossible to limit inspiration to the concept, for Peter tells us that some of the writers did not understand the meaning of what they wrote. They were “searching what or what manner of time the Spirit of Christ which was in them did signify, when it testified beforehand the sufferings of Christ, and the glory that should follow.” \*

The point which I desire to emphasize is, that inspiration, in its biblical and confessional sense, has for its object to produce the Written Word. It is *the Writings, the Scriptures, which are inspired of God*. I shall give further proof of this directly. I do not intend to say that the human element has no part in Scripture. It was utilized throughout, but the divine is everywhere supreme and controlling.

The writers of the Bible speak for God, in His name, and by His authority. They were His spokesmen, proclaiming and conveying His truth. The human instrumentality, with all its peculiarity, was utilized by the divine Spirit for the conveyance of God’s infallible message to men.

And it is the union of absolute truth and divine authority which constitutes the claim of the Scripture to our faith and obedience.

A special inspiration was necessary, that in a world of sin and error we might have the unerring truth of God, to whose infallible guidance we might entrust ourselves.

Other books give us truth mixed with error, but the inspired Book gives us truth without error. Inspiration gives us truthfulness as its *product* in the Holy Scripture. It may not be the completeness of truth, for part of the truth can be truthfully written; it may not be truth expressed in the most perfect and beautiful form, for the unlearned peasant can speak truth as well as the most polished scholar; it may not be truth at all, but the false sayings and evil deeds of the wicked are truthfully reported.

The authors of the Bible wrote the simple truth which God

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\* 1 Peter i. 11.



desired mankind to know. But, says one, what practical use is there in talking about the inerrant originals? They are not in existence. The Bible as we have it has discrepancies in it, and we are obliged to get on with them as best we can. That is true. We all accept the position. And a reverent scholarship will do its best to explain the discrepancies in a way that will harmonize with the perfect truthfulness of God's Word. But when, starting from the fact that the Bible, as we have it, is not free from discrepancies, some boldly assert that there were errors in the original autographs of Scripture, and that we must accept that as an established truth, then we demur. No one is warranted in making such an assertion.

This is a point of the highest importance, since it will vitally affect the faith and life of the Church. There is a vital difference here. It is the difference between divine truth and human error, between a book which is truly of God, and one which is not. It makes a vast difference whether the water which I drink comes from a perfectly pure spring, and has gathered only a few foreign substances on its way to me, or comes from a fountain which is itself foul. For, in the former case, I may find the source of the difficulty, and remove it, and so supply myself with water in all the sparkling purity in which it flows from its source. But in the latter case I should despair of ever having pure water, unless another fountain were discovered.

And so, if the original Scriptures were absolutely true, as God their Author is true, then we have in that truth a firm assurance that all copies, in spite of the blemishes which have gathered on them through copying, transmitting and human carelessness, are yet immeasurably true; then also we can understand the better why it is that in all copies, translations and languages, the Word comes with the same divine power and authority; and we may also cherish the hope that in God's good Providence we may light again on the inerrant originals.

But it is not merely on account of its great importance to

the Church that this doctrine should be believed and defended at all hazards, *but for the reason that it is taught in the Word of God.*

Having thus shown that Dr. Briggs teaches a view of inspiration which destroys the infallibility of the Scriptures, since, according to it, the written Word is only of human production, we might cease our argument here, and claim that by taking such a position he has gone quite outside of the bounds of the faith held by Presbyterians, who believe in the infallibility of the Bible on the ground of the complete inspiration and truthfulness of the written Word of God. But Dr. Briggs contends that, not ours, but his view of inspiration is the doctrine both of the Scripture and the Church. It is necessary, therefore, to show the entire untenableness of this claim.

The Bible claims for itself, as written, full inspiration and entire veracity.

But to prove the inspiration and authority of the Scriptures on the authority of the writers involves, according to Dr. Briggs, a vicious circle, a fallacy, which has driven men away from the Bible. But rightly understood, that argument does not move in a circle, nor does it involve a fallacy. If there was such a thing as inspiration, only the prophet himself and God could be personal witnesses to that fact, and these two are perfectly trustworthy witnesses.

The writers also of the Scripture support each other, and we receive their testimony in respect to their divine inspiration and authority for the reason that they are *credible witnesses*. And that credibility is established independently of their claim to inspiration. In the last resort it rests on the testimony of Christ, the incarnate God Himself, who commissioned them to teach, and gave them the Spirit of truth for that purpose; for, in uttering His truth He bore "them witness, both with signs and wonders and with divers miracles and gifts of the Holy Ghost according to His own will." \* The testimony,

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\* Heb. ii. 4.



therefore, which the writers of the Bible bear to their divine authority to speak for God is to be believed for the reason that it is properly attested and worthy of belief. Their claim was acknowledged by the living Church of their own generation. The historical fact that their writings continued to be received as canonical shows that the acceptance of their claim did not terminate with their own lives, nor with the passing away of the generation in which they lived.

We have thus the living testimony of the living Church of their own day; and that testimony will be valid to the end of time. It is of infinitely greater value, on the point at issue, than that which the critics elicit from the canons of subjective impressions.

The Holy Scripture claims for itself two things in respect to this matter:

One is, *that it is inspired* of God throughout. It fully bears out our confessional statement, that the canonical books of the Old and New Testaments, taken as a whole, are the "Word of God written." They make the one *Holy Scripture*.

It speaks of its contents as the Laws, the Statutes, the Commandments, the Judgments, the Testimony, the Covenant, the Words and the Oracles of God, terms which would have no meaning if the divine authorship did not also extend to the *language* of Scripture. Of numerous passages cited in the New Testament from the Old, in which God was not the speaker, it is affirmed that they were spoken by the mouth of God, and of the Holy Spirit. \*

In Zechariah we have the definite statement that the words of the Holy Scripture are "*the words which the Lord of*

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\* Acts iv. 25; Matt. xv. 4; Matt. xix. 4, 5; Mark xii. 36; John x. 34, 35; Gal. iii. 22; Heb. i. 6, 7, 8; iii. 7; iv. 4, 7; vii. 21; x. 15; 1 Peter ii. 6.

*Hosts hath sent by His Spirit by the hand of the former prophets.\**

It is expressly declared that "all Scripture is given by inspiration of God;" and both the connection in which this text stands and linguistic analogy † demonstrate the correctness of the wording of the received text. Evidently the words "all Scripture," of verse 16, are identical with the Holy Scriptures of verse 15, by which the entire Old Testament was meant. But the revised version, "every Scripture inspired of God," only strengthens the point to which I am now speaking, for the word "Scripture" is invariably used in the Bible for an inspired writing; and it is therefore as unbiblical as it is anti-confessional to imply, as Dr. Briggs seems to do in his response, that there are Scriptures which are not inspired. It was the whole Old Testament Scripture which was able to make Timothy wise unto salvation; and it had that excellence for the reason that all those Scriptures were inspired of God.

And the holy contents of the book, so lofty in its spiritual and moral elevation, confirm this statement. Also its structural unity, around which are arranged, in symmetrical beauty, the great varieties of subject-matter, and numerous incidental statements of more than a score of writers who lived in different climes and countries, and at a distance from each other, in time, of more than fifteen centuries, so that the Bible is really but one book, manifesting but one mind, and unfolding but one theme, gives added proof that it is the product, in all its parts, of the infinite wisdom and goodness of the one Divine Spirit.

Peter claims the same divine authority for his own writings

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\* Zech. vii. 12.

† The true reading of Matt. ii. 3, is not *every Jerusalem*, but "*all Jerusalem*;" in Luke vii. 6, not *every fle.h*, but "*all flesh*," and in Acts ii. 36, not *every house* of Israel, but "*all the house* of Israel.'



which he assigns to the Old Testament Scriptures, and assigns it equally to those of Paul.

It is stated in express terms that the divine inspiration extends to both thought and language; for Peter declares that “no prophecy of the Scripture is of any private interpretation. For the prophecy came not at any time by the will of man, but holy men of God spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost.” \*

And Paul writes to the same point when he states: “Now we have received not the spirit of the world, but the spirit which is of God; that we might know the things which are freely given us of God,”—all of which might refer to concepts,—but he proceeds to say, “*which things also we speak, not in the words which man’s wisdom teacheth, but which the Holy Ghost teacheth*, comparing spiritual things with spiritual.” †

In these two statements of Peter and Paul, taken together with the connection in which they stand, we have the biblical view of inspiration. It contains the following particulars: *First*, the Spirit made known to the writers the things to be communicated; *second*, they were inspired clearly to see the matter to be conveyed; *third*, they were conscious that the Holy Spirit made known the truth to them and illumined their minds; *fourth*, while they themselves gave expression to the divine message they were conscious also that the Holy Spirit assisted them in that expression; and *fifth*, what they thus spake and wrote was, in a real sense, the message of the Spirit of God, both in respect to matter and expression, and, therefore, so sure, true and trustworthy that only the spiritually blind would fail to receive it. And it is worthy of note that this definition of inspiration by the apostles is in exact accord with the promise Christ made to them that they should receive “the Spirit of truth to guide them into all truth.” ‡

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\* 2 Peter i. 21.

† 1 Cor. ii. 12, 13.

‡ John xvi. 13.

He certainly reads the New Testament to little purpose, who does not perceive that the writers of it, in places too numerous to instance, both directly and indirectly, teach the inspiration of the Old Testament writings in the strictest and fullest sense. Men of a progressive and liberal way of thinking, who do not themselves believe in the doctrine, admit this.

Canon Farrar states that Paul's view of the nature of inspiration led him to make "The words of Scripture co-extensive and identical with the words of God;" and that he used "the word and letter of Scripture as full of divine mysterious oracles, which might not only be cited in matters of doctrine, but even to illustrate the simplest matters of contemporary fact."\*

Richard Rothe, a German writer on Dogmatic Theology, who himself holds only to a minimum of inspiration, if he holds to any, makes this remarkable admission: "The New Testament authors look upon the words of the Old Testament as *immediate* words of God, and put them forward as such, even those of them which are not recorded as direct declarations of God. They see nothing in the sacred volume which is simply the word of its human author, and not at the same time the very word of God Himself. In all that stands 'written' God Himself speaks to them, and so entirely are they habituated to think only of this, that they take the sacred word written itself, as such, to be God's word, and hear God speaking in it immediately. . . . It admits of no doubt that the apostolical writers . . . refer the prophetic inspiration to the *actus scribendi* of the biblical authors." †

And this holds good with equal, if not greater force, of their own writings in the New Testament. They do, indeed, make that claim for them. But how has it come to pass that a doctrine in which, to say nothing of the Old Testament authors, all the New Testament writers agree, a doctrine which they make to the utmost emphatic, working it into the very warp

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\* Life of St. Paul. One volume, pp. 27, 28.

† Quoted by Dr. B. B. Warfield in *Homiletical Review*, May, 1891, pp. 413, 414.



and woof of their writings, is no longer to be believed in the Presbyterian Church, but is to be thrown aside as incredible on the demand of a body of critics who have as yet found nothing trustworthy to put in its place? If this is now to be the position of the Presbyterian Church, what then becomes of our boasted doctrine of the infallibility of the Holy Scripture? Wherein can it longer be the rule of either faith or conduct?

The most marked feature of our Church hitherto has been its scriptural character. It has based its doctrines, polity and life on the divine authority of the Holy Scripture. It has referred everything to a "*Thus saith the Lord.*" This has given it power and gained for it the confidence of mankind. Where shall be the seat of our infallible authority hereafter? Shall it be the Church, the Pope, the Reason, or shall we still abide by the Old Scriptures of God which have led and blessed us so long? Whither are we tending? The Church of God at large looks to this Presbytery to give a right answer to that question in bearing unfaltering witness for the truth committed to us.

The other claim which Scripture makes for itself is, *entire truthfulness (inerrancy, if you please).*

The true biblical doctrine of the inspiration of the Scriptures necessarily implies their infallible truthfulness. It could not be infallible if not truthful. Dr. Briggs makes inspiration refer only to truths revealed to the writers of the Bible by the Lord, and to that extent he would undoubtedly make it a guarantee for entire truthfulness. He would certainly not contend that God, in revealing truth to men, communicated error. But we have shown that, according to the true doctrine, inspiration extends to all parts of the written Word, so that God is in a true sense the Author thereof, and this cannot fail to assure us of its exact veracity.

We would have to change our idea of God completely to admit any other supposition. He is the embodiment of truth, and "is not a man that He should lie." But it is unnecessary to press this point any further than to insist that it leads to a strong presumption in favor of the perfect inerrancy of the

original Scriptures. It is a presumption so strong that the contrary must be clearly shown before it can be abandoned.

But it is urged that the Scripture does not claim inerrancy for itself. It would be more correct to say that it does not make the direct claim very prominent. It affirms it often enough to be quite effective.

If we should have an asseveration of perfect truthfulness at every verse or chapter, it might raise a suspicion of untruthfulness, since no one is less likely to be truthful than one who is constantly affirming it of himself. The Scripture claims to be, as the word of God, the "Scripture of truth," working effectually to salvation in them that believe, which could not be affirmed of error in any conceivable way. God's commandments are "sure"; His law is "the truth"; His "word is true from the beginning"; not one jot or tittle of it shall fail, but everything is to be fulfilled; the record of Scripture is made with such painstaking veracity that it gives us infallible certainty, so that whatever is written in the law and the prophets may be surely believed.

But the Bible makes a still higher claim for itself than simple truthfulness. A truthful statement may be an imperfect one, since completeness of statement is not necessary to truthfulness. But the Word of God claims perfection for itself, and a perfection which reaches far beyond the utmost human perfection and which has been established by its trial. And when we remember that it has a breadth and depth so vast that the most profound Christian scholars, after devoting to it a lifetime of reverent, patient study, feel themselves only in the border-land of its inexhaustible wealth of divine truth, who will deny that this claim to perfection is well founded? However, I am arguing simply for the entire truthfulness of the Divine Word, which certainly derives strong support from its claim to perfection. But this characteristic of strict veracity, in all things, appears in the Scriptures far more clearly and forcibly in incidental ways than in direct affirmation.

It is stated that "whatsoever things were written aforetime were written for our learning, that we, through patience and



comfort of the Scripture, might have hope." \* But error can induce neither patience nor comfort, and will surely blast every hope built on it. He only who builds his hope on God's inerrant Word shall never come to shame.

But further, the entire truthfulness of Scripture is everywhere assumed on its pages, so that most important conclusions are reached from it with absolute certainty. From the single word "whosoever," used by the Prophet Joel, Paul elaborately argues that there is no difference between Jew and Gentile; from the word "every" in the verse, "As I live, saith the Lord, every knee shall bow to me," it is solemnly affirmed in Rom. xiv. 11, "We shall all stand before the judgment seat of Christ"; in arguing that eternal life is not given for human merit, but is received by faith alone, in Gal. iii. 16 the Apostle makes the argument turn on the fact that the word "seed" is used in the singular instead of the plural; in Heb. xii. 27, the immutability of the Gospel Kingdom is affirmed on the basis of the adverbial phrase "once more," used by Haggai; and in John x. 35, Christ makes an argument on the inviolability of a single word of Scripture, which cannot be broken. But it is not necessary further to pursue this train of thought. A large number of additional places can be indicated where the minute truthfulness of Scripture is thus assumed and the most important inferences drawn from it.

But the Scriptures are a communication from God; they bring us light and truth on the questions of salvation and eternal life which nature and reason cannot impart; they speak to us with the authority of God, and demand our belief as faithful sayings worthy of all acceptance; everything written was intended to induce our belief; and so strongly do they urge their claims to be implicitly believed, that they declare the absence of a belief in them to be a sin which the Lord will punish severely. The Jews were declared guilty by Christ for the reason that they did not believe what Moses had written. Unbelief is, in fact, the greatest sin, since it impeaches the

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\* Rom. xv. 4.

truthfulness of God, in refusing to credit the record which He has given us in the Word concerning His Son.

Now, all this would simply be preposterous if the Word of God were mixed with human errors in Scripture as Dr. Briggs affirms.

The character which the Word of God gives to itself, and the solemn claims it makes upon us for implicit belief, are consistent with nothing else than its absolute truthfulness. Thus only it is possible that "man shall live by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God," by which our Saviour meant the written Scripture. And in this connection it is well to notice, as a most eloquent testimony to the literal and complete inspiration of the written Word of God, that whenever men have taken this book and have spoken from it with a "thus saith the Lord," they have touched the consciences of men, led them in faith and repentance to the Saviour, turned the world upside down, banished innumerable wrongs and falsehoods, and renewed human society in a life of moral and spiritual beauty.

We thus see that the Scripture bears ample testimony to the received doctrine of its own complete inspiration as the Word of God written, and its entire truthfulness.

It is this scriptural doctrine, believed and revered by the devout people of Christ, which Dr. Briggs squarely contradicts. He throws it aside, and gives us another entirely different doctrine, according to which the written Word is not inspired, and cannot be an infallible guide. He tries to justify himself by asserting that the doctrine of inspiration as now held by the Church, and as we have defined it, is comparatively modern, a perversion of the true doctrine which has never been held by the historic Church of Christ, and particularly not by the Westminster divines.

Canon Westcott has, with painstaking care, collated a large amount of testimony which proves conclusively that during the early centuries of the Christian era, no other doctrine was held in the Christian Church.\* Professor Henry B. Smith has called

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\* Introduction to the Study of the Gospels, Appendix B.



attention to the fact that for more than 1,600 years it was questioned only by a few individuals." \*

And in modern times it has been the unshaken faith of the entire Protestant Evangelical Church, whose great divines have ably defended it, showing that such difficulties as we find in our copies of the Scriptures could be explained in entire consistency with their full inspiration, infallible authority and perfect truthfulness. And the present trouble has its origin in the fact that men of rationalistic tendencies would surrender this vital citadel to the enemy without its being conquered. Against this infidelity to the old faith and to the precious truths committed to us, the great body of our Church protests. It is not our accepted view of inspiration, but that put forward by Dr. Briggs, which is the new and modern one. He asserts that the Reformers conceded the presence of errors in the original Scriptures, but he has not given a single good proof of that remarkable statement. And it certainly requires the clearest proof to induce us to believe that those men, who held to the strictest view of verbal inspiration, taught that the Scriptures had come from the hand of God with errors in them.

The case of Luther proves the contradictory of this. We know that, owing to his views on justification by faith, he had at first some difficulty in admitting certain books into the canon of Scripture. On clearer light these difficulties disappeared from his mind.

In "The Bible, the Church and the Reason," a book which Dr. Briggs has put in evidence, he gives three extracts from Luther's works and one from DeWette, to show that Luther admitted that there are errors in the original autographs of Scripture. But those citations prove no such thing, as any one may learn from a careful perusal of them. In the first three quotations it is plain that Luther was laboring to harmonize difficulties, and the last one of the three suggests the way in which harmony might be reached. In the extract from DeWette's collection of letters, Luther merely declares that he is

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\* Sermon on Inspiration.

not satisfied with some one's explanation of the Scripture difficulty named; but he does not say that he despaired of finding a harmony.

It will scarcely be possible to show from Luther's extended writings that he ever doubted the literal inspiration and the entire truthfulness of the written Word of God in the canonical books of Scripture. He was a great stickler for the literal correctness and absolute authority of the very words of Scripture, as the following extracts from his writings will abundantly show.

Luther calls the Bible "God's letters," and accuses the Pope of a desire to destroy them. \* He says: "*It is the word of truth, or the true word.*" †

Speaking of those who affirm that the Word of God cannot be true for the reason that many who hear it do not believe it, and are not made godly by it, Luther says: "Then we are to judge the Word of God by the hallowed effects it may have on those who hear it. But the Word of God is absolutely true, even if all who hear it should not believe on it. They will know it at the last day." ‡

"Thy word is very true, therefore it admits of no addition from human teaching." §

"The Word of God, which is in itself perfect, must for that reason not be changed." ||

"Holy men have erred in their writings, and sinned in their lives, but the Scriptures cannot err." ¶

"It is impossible to fathom and to explore to its depth a single word of the Holy Scripture. It bids defiance to all scholars and theologians. For the words of the Scripture are the words of the Holy Spirit, and, therefore, they are too high for all men." \*\*

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\* History of the Reformation, by D'Aubigné. Vol. ii. p. 229.

† Plochmann and Irmischer. Vol. viii. p. 134.

‡ Plochmann and Irmischer. Vol. xlv. p. 165.

§ Walch. Vol. v. p. 1838.

|| Plochmann and Irmischer. Vol. lvii. p. 66.

¶ Plochmann and Irmischer. Vol. xxviii. p. 33.

\*\* Plochmann and Irmischer. Vol. lvii. p. 13.



“The Bible is God's Word and Book.” The creation is, and remains as it is written in Scripture, and notwithstanding all the attempts of its enemies to destroy it, “the Book has evermore remained fixed and altogether perfect as it was written.”\*

“I will have nothing but the Word of God, and do not ask for wonders and visions; nor will I believe an angel if he should teach me contrary to the Word of God. I believe the words and works of God alone; for the Word of God has been true from the beginning, and has never failed. I know from practical experience that everything occurs as it is written in the Word of God.” †

Speaking in defence of his position to Chancellor Wehe, Luther said: “I will never allow any man to set himself above the word of God. . . . I can endure everything, but I cannot abandon the Holy Scripture. . . . I would rather lose my life—rather have my arms and legs cut off, than forsake the clear and true word of God.” ‡

“The Bible or Scripture, is not such a book as originates from reason or human wisdom. The arts of jurists and poets are of the reason, and can again be understood and comprehended by the reason. But the teaching of Moses and the prophets does not come from reason nor from human wisdom. Therefore, he who attempts to comprehend Moses and the prophets by the reason, and to measure and explain the Scripture according to the dictates of reason, will miss the meaning of it altogether. For all heretics, from the beginning, have arisen from this fact, that they have thought that what they read in Scripture, they could explain by the light of reason.” §

“Replying to those who affirmed that there are contradictions in the Scriptures, Luther said: “It is impossible that the Scripture should contradict itself. Only ignorant, coarse, and hardened hypocrites think so.” But to those who are devout

\* Plochmann and Irmischer. Vol. lvii. p. 2.

† Plochmann and Irmischer. Vol. lvii. p. 45.

‡ History of the Reformation, by D' Aubigné, vol. ii., pp. 283, 284.

§ Plochmann and Irmischer, Vol. iii., p. 335.

and properly enlightened, the Scripture "gives testimony for her Lord and holds with Him. Therefore you should have a care how you compare and harmonize those texts of which you say that they do not agree with each other." \*

Exhorting Christians to guard against the errors of false teachers by receiving implicitly all that God has revealed in the Holy Scripture and only that, he stated: "For one letter, yes, a single jot of the Scripture is of more and greater consequence than heaven and earth. Therefore we cannot consent that the most insignificant part of it should be displaced." †

Melanchthon, in reply to Dr. Eck's attack on Luther, defined the great Reformer's position in these words: "There is but one Scripture, inspired by the Holy Ghost, and pure and true in all things." . . . "The meaning of Scripture is one and simple like heavenly truth itself. It is obtained by comparing Scripture with Scripture; it is deduced from the thread and connection of the discourse. There is a philosophy that is enjoined by us as regards the divine Scriptures, and that is, to bring all human opinions and maxims to it, as to a touchstone by which to try them." ‡ *Luther testifies for an inerrant Bible.*

Dr. Briggs also cites the great name of John Calvin to uphold him in his views of an errant Bible. But he meets here with no better success. The citations which he gives do not fasten such a doctrine of Scripture on the great reformer.

It is not true that in his notes on Matthew xxvii. 9, he charged the Apostle with making a mistake, but says that the name of Jeremiah "crept in" for that of Zechariah, and it must have crept into a copy of the original correct version. In Acts vii. 16, he does not connect the name of Luke with the mistake in the name of Abraham. It is an infinitive construction: "*In nomine Abrahae erratum esse palam est.*" ("It is well known that there is an error in the name of Abraham.") And the fact that he suggests an emendation of the text leads us to infer rather that in his mind there was an original, perfect text, for which the imperfect one should be exchanged.

In the extracts which Dr. Briggs has made from Calvin's

\* Walch, Vol. viii., p. 2140.

† Walch, Vol. viii., p. 2661.

‡ History of the Reformation, by D'Aubigné, Vol. 2, p. 76.



Commentaries on Rom. x. 6 and Heb. xi. 21, Calvin shows that the inspired writer had not in either case violated the law of quotation, but had given the true sense of the Old Testament passages. He even speaks of the "*pure and original text*," and this shows that he held the original text to be free from error. Calvin considered it wicked to charge a New Testament writer with having misused the Scripture. Under Eph. iv. 8 he says: "Wicked men charge Paul with having made an unfair use of Scripture." On 1 Cor. ii. 9, having intimated that such a charge comes from the "calumnies of the wicked," he states: "It is further removed from Paul's meaning, on which we ought to place more dependence than on any other consideration. For where shall we find a surer or more faithful interpreter than the Spirit of God of this authoritative declaration which He himself dictated to Isaiah—in the exposition which he has furnished by the mouth of Paul?"

But Calvin's views of the origin of the Holy Scriptures were such that it was simply impossible for him ever to have stated that an inspired writer had made an error in the original autograph. He held that the Holy Spirit verbally dictated the Scripture. He stated "that the prophets did not speak at their own suggestion, but that, being organs of the Holy Spirit, they only uttered what they had been commissioned from heaven to declare. The law and the prophets are not a doctrine delivered according to the will of man, but dictated by the Holy Spirit."\* He affirmed that the New Testament writers were inspired in the same extent and degree as those of the Old.†

On 2 Pet. i. 21, he states: "That the beginning of right knowledge is to give credit to the holy prophets which is due to God . . . they dared not to announce anything of their own and obediently followed the Spirit as their guide, who ruled in their mouth as in his own sanctuary."‡ Again he uses these words: "Whatever is delivered in Scripture we ought to learn; for it were a reproach offered to the Holy Spirit, that He has

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\* Commentary on 2 Tim. iii. 16.

† Commentary, Rom. xv. 4.

‡ 2 Pet. i. 21, Commentary.

taught anything which it does not concern us to know." \* He held it to be criminal either to add or take away anything from the Sacred Scriptures. †

"The whole order of the world," he declares, "bears testimony to the steadfastness of God's Word—*that Word which is most true.*" ‡ "The Word of God has been from the beginning certain and infallible truth, and will continue so even to the end." § "The greatest human perfection," he affirms, "is nothing when compared with God's Word, inasmuch as all other things will soon come to an end, whereas, the Word of God stands ever firm in its own eternity." ||

In his catechism, giving an answer to the question: "How are you to use the Holy Scriptures in order to profit by it?" he says: "By embracing it with entire heartfelt persuasion, as certain truth come down from heaven." ¶

When for his earnest defence of the Bible he was accused of stirring up fiery contests about nothing, he said: "My answer is, that when divine truth is avowedly attacked, we must not tolerate the adulteration of one single *iota* of it. It is certainly no trivial matter to see God's light extinguished by the devil's darkness; and besides, this matter is of greater moment than many suppose." \*\* *Calvin held to an inerrant Bible.*

Now, inasmuch as Calvin always uses language with admirable precision, any seemingly doubtful statement of his in exegesis must be interpreted in harmony with his many positive expressions on the literal inspiration and entire truthfulness of God's written Word.

The French historian, Guizot, had no doubt that Calvin held to the inerrancy of Scripture. He said: "Like Calvin, many pious and learned men uphold the plenary inspiration of the Holy Scripture; they assert that not only the thoughts, but the words in which they are clothed are divinely inspired—every word on every subject, the language as well as the doctrine." ††

The Reformers could hold no other view on this question. The Word of God was to them the sword of the Spirit and the unfailing source of defence.

\* Commentary, Rom. xv. 4.

† Tracts, vol. 2, p. 133.

‡ Commentary on Ps. cxix. 89.

§ Commentary on Ps. cxix. 160.

|| Commentary on Ps. cxix. 96.

¶ Tracts, vol. 3, p. 82.

\*\* Tracts, vol. 3, p. 418.

†† Life of Calvin, chap. 4.



Dr. Briggs himself says that Andrew Rivetus was one of the most prominent divines of the Reformation period. He cites him on the question of authenticity, but the quotation plainly indicates what the Reformers held as to inspiration. Rivetus's words are: "This only is to be held as certain, whether David or Moses or any other composed the Psalms, they themselves were as pens, but the Holy Ghost wrote through them; but it is not necessary to trouble ourselves about the pens when the true author is established."\*

Dr. Briggs also seeks to fortify himself in his views by affirming that the Westminster divines did not hold to that plenary inspiration of the Holy Scriptures which insures their entire truthfulness. As far as my knowledge extends, he is the first one to make that assertion. He says it is a modern notion forced on the Church by traditionalists and evangelicals. He would have people believe that we are reading an opinion into the Confession which the framers of it never intended to embody in it. He stoutly affirms that neither the Bible nor any of the Reformed creeds teach the doctrine of the inerrancy of Scripture, and he is sure that the Westminster divines held exactly the contrary.

How he can reiterate in his different publications what to me seems so obviously untrue, passes my comprehension. Certainly, it has been held for 250 years that our Confession taught at least the plenary inspiration and the perfect veracity of Holy Scripture, and presumably that is what the authors of it meant to state. This will appear all the more probable from the fact, as we shall soon show, that they themselves held the strictest theory of verbal inspiration.

It probably never occurred to them, when they stated that God, who is truth itself, is the Author of the Scriptures, that He committed them to writing, immediately inspired them, so that they are the Word of God written, and that Scripture is to be believed because it is the Word of God,

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\* Biblical Study, pp. 167, 168.

that any one could ever suggest the idea that they did not mean to teach the plenary inspiration and perfect truthfulness of Scripture.

There were some in the Westminster Assembly who held the view that the Bible is fully inspired in respect to faith and morals, but contained errors in matters of minor detail, but that was a condemned minority opinion, which is of no more value in helping us to construe the Confession of Faith than minority opinions contained in the *Federalist* are authority to show what the framers of our national constitution meant to express.

All the controlling minds of the Assembly, most of their like-minded contemporaries, and many contemporaries who were not like-minded—in fact, the great body of the Evangelical Church—believed the theory of verbal inspiration, and the infallible truthfulness of Scripture.

In *The Bible, the Church, and the Reason*, and also in “*Whither?*” Dr. Briggs cites Samuel Rutherford as one of the Westminster divines “who did not teach the inerrancy of the original autographs.” But an examination of his writings will show that that is exactly what he did teach. In arguing with John Goodwin, who was not willing to call copies and translations of the Bible the Word of God, Rutherford came near claiming inerrancy for the translation, stating: “For though scribes, translators, grammarians and printers, may all err, it followeth not that an unerring Providence of Him that hath seven eyes hath not delivered to the Church the Scriptures containing the infallible truth of God.”

Rutherford regarded the whole Scripture in the originals to be “the infallible Word of God,” written by “prophets who cannot err.” Indeed, he looked on the language of Scripture as spoken by the Holy Spirit, so that “if any one should say” anything contrary to a Scripture statement, he would “contradict the Holy Ghost.” He said: “We believe all things written, be they fundamental or no, for God hath written them all for us.” “The Word of God is full of divinity . . . and certainty.” “We have a more sure word of prophecy, the



Scriptures, yea, surer than the Father's voice from heaven, which was an immediate oracle, indeed."\*

It is evident also that John Goodwin, his antagonist, himself held the same high views on the inspiration of the *autographs* of Scripture as Rutherford did.

Goodwin himself stated: "I never denied, but have a thousand times over affirmed, and by many arguments and demonstrations evinced the Scriptures to be the Word of God. . . . But in exactness of speaking the English translation is not the Word of God." †

The case of Richard Capel is precisely similar to that of Rutherford. He was chiding those who were making so much of the uncertainties and errors which had come into the Scripture through the fallibilities of scribes and translators, saying, "These be terrible blasts, and do little else when they meet with a weak head and heart but to open the door to atheism, and quite to fling off the bridle, which only can hold them and us in the ways of truth and piety: this is to fill the conceits of men with evil thoughts *against the purity of the originals.*"

"It is granted," he says, "that translators were not led by such an infallible Spirit as the Prophets and Apostles were." "Translators and transcribers *might err*, being not endued with that *infallible Spirit* in translating and transcribing, as Moses and the Prophets *were in their original writings.*" To him, then, the originals were "the dictates of the Spirit," and their writers, being imbued with the infallible spirit, might not err. ‡

William Lyford is another witness whom Dr. Briggs cites for the errancy of Scripture. But Lyford was far from intending anything of the kind. His contention was that the Word of God was competently conveyed in the English translation, but he states explicitly that the difference between the originals

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\* A free Disputation against Pretenses of Liberty of Conscience, pp. 370, 371, 353, 354, 373, 366, 193.

† The Divine Authority of the Scriptures, p. 8.

‡ Remains, pp. 12, 38, 43, 48.

and translations arises from the fact that "the translators were not assisted immediately by the Holy Ghost," while "such extraordinary assistance is needful to one that shall indite any part of Scripture." "The *Divine Truth* is perfectly, immediately and most absolutely in the original Hebrew and Greek."\*

Matthew Pool and John Ball merely denied that the verbal inspiration of Scripture can be proved by the testimony of the Holy Spirit in the heart, a statement which no one will deny.

But they must have held that it could be established in another way since they both believed in it.

For John Ball states in his Catechism:

*Q.* What call you the Word of God?

*A.* The Holy Scriptures immediately inspired, which are contained in the books of the Old and New Testaments.

*Q.* What is it to be immediately inspired?

*A.* To be immediately inspired is to be as it were breathed, and to come from the Father by the Holy Ghost without all means. (Here we have the meaning of the word "immediately" as used by the Westminster Divines in connection with inspiration.)

*Q.* Were the Scriptures thus inspired?

*A.* Thus the Holy Scriptures in the originals were inspired, both for matter and words.

*Q.* Is it expedient to know that these books are the word of God?

*A.* It is very expedient and necessary that all Christians of age and discretion should know that the Scriptures are the very word of God.

*Q.* What is it to know them to be the word of God?

*A.* It is to know them to be the immediate and infallible truth of God that is to be received, obeyed and believed. †

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\* Plain Man's Sense Exercised, pp. 49, 50.

† A Short Treatise Containing all the Principal Grounds of the Christian Religion, pp. 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10.



And Matthew Pool, who was the great Presbyterian critic of the Scripture in the 17th century, has given this clear statement of his views on the subject: "The writers of the Bible were the special instruments of the Holy Ghost who sanctified them to the work of preaching and penning what He dictated to them." \* "The Word of God is without the least mixture of any falsehood or sin, both which are frequent in the works and precepts of men." †

Dr. Briggs also calls in Richard Baxter to testify in favor of the view that inspiration does not rule errors out of Scripture. Baxter was not a member of the Westminster Assembly, but was a like-minded contemporary, a man of a broad and well-balanced mind, a great scholar and a warm-hearted Christian. He is a witness of the highest order.

The quotations given in *The Bible, the Church, and the Reason*, and in "*Whither*," do not prove the point, and Baxter has expressed himself so unequivocally in the matter that there is really no excuse for misunderstanding him. In his treatise on the Reasons of the Christian Religion, he states the objection: "The Scripture hath many contradictions in it, in point of history, chronology and other things; therefore it is not the Word of God." To which he replies: "Nothing but ignorance maketh men think so; understand once the true meaning, and allow for the errors of printers, transcribers and translators, and there will no such thing be found. Young students in all sciences think their books are full of contradictions, which they can easily reconcile when they come to understand them." He then states that there were two opinions on the subject of inspiration: One was to the effect that inspiration secures the truthfulness of the writers of the Bible in all matters of faith and salvation, but not in every word of chronological and historical narration.

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\* Pool's Commentary, 1 Pet. i. 21.

† Pool's Commentary, Psalm cxix. 140.

This view he discards, and gives as his own that which he declares to be the true doctrine, namely: "That the Scriptures are so entirely and perfectly the product of the Spirit's inspiration that there is no word in them which is not infallibly true."

"I think," he said, "*that no one error or contradiction in any matter can be proved in the Scripture.*"\* He did indeed state that he could "prove the truth of the Christian religion without assuming the freedom of the Scripture from all error;" yet he "doubted not to prove this their perfection against all the cavils of infidels."†

Chillingworth, in his discussion with the Roman Catholics, makes it plain that they also held to the complete inspiration and truthfulness of the Bible, but they contended that the Scripture was not sufficient, but needed to be supplemented by an "*unwritten word of God*" coming through tradition or the Church. Chillingworth accepted the following words, put in his mouth by his Romanist antagonist, that "*every book, chapter, and text of Scripture is infallible, and wants no due perfection,*" but argued that the entire Canonical Scripture only was the perfect rule of faith, and that this Scripture, as "the Word of God Written," was in every way sufficient for man's needs.‡ And this shows us how that expression, "the Word of God Written," came to be incorporated in our Confession, and what the framers of it meant by it.

In their view the terms "Scripture" and "Word of God" were synonymous. By the statement of the Shorter Catechism, "the Word of God which is *contained* in the Scriptures," they intended to rule out the Roman Catholic idea that there was also a word of God in the Church and Tradition, and it is therefore identical with the confessional statement, the Scriptures *are* "the Word of God written."

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\* Baxter's Works, London, Vol. 21, pp. 347, 348.

† Baxter's Works, Vol. 20, p. 118.

‡ Chillingworth's Works, London, Vol. 1, p. 205.



And when Dr. Briggs insists, in the interest of an errant Bible, that our Standards teach that there are other things contained in the Scriptures in addition to the Word of God, he endeavors to force into them a meaning which the framers of them had not the remotest intention to express.

Dr. Henry Hammond, author of the "Paraphrase and Annotation of the New Testament," was named to be one of the Westminster divines, but never sat with them. He was a royalist and considered to be an Arminian in his theological views. He was therefore not a like-minded contemporary. That he exerted a wide influence is evident from the fact that a catechism which he published, reached its 16th edition. His views on inspiration may be gathered from the following comment on 2 Pet. i. 21: "For none of the prophets of any time have undertaken that office on their own head, and prophesied their own fancies, or persuasions, but all the Scripture prophets have been called and sent by God on his messages, and inspired and instructed by the Holy Spirit of God every word which they delivered."

John White, one of the most active members of the Westminster Assembly, holding the place of one of the two assessors, and exerting an influence in shaping the decisions of the Assembly, second to none, may be regarded as a thoroughly fair exponent of the doctrines then prevailing. On the question of inspiration, he made this statement: "Yea, beyond all this, the Holy Ghost not only suggested unto them the substance of the doctrine which they were to deliver and leave upon record unto the Church (for so far he usually assists faithful ministers in dispensing the Word in the course of their Gospel ministry), but besides, has supplied unto them the very phrases, method, and whole order of those things that are written in the Scriptures, whereas, he leaves ministers in preaching the Word to the choice of their own phrases and expressions, wherein, as also in some particulars which they deliver, they may be mistaken. . . . Thus, then, the Holy

Ghost not only assisted holy men in penning the Scripture, but, in a sort, took the work out of their hands, making use of nothing in the men but of their understanding, to receive and comprehend, their wills to consent unto, and their hands to write down that which they delivered." \*

John Lightfoot, of Ashley, besides being one of the most honored and influential members of the Westminster Assembly, was also an oriental and biblical scholar of considerable note. He is a good witness, and the last one to whom I will refer.

In his sermon on the "Difficulties of Scripture," he said:

"The Holy Ghost hath purposely penned the Scripture so as to challenge all serious study of them.

"Peter tells that there are divers things in Paul's epistles hard to be understood; and why did the Holy Ghost dictate them so hard by Paul? And why did not Peter explain them who had the same Spirit? Because the Holy Ghost hath penned the Scripture so as to challenge all serious study. He could have penned all so plain that he that runneth might have read them; but he hath penned them in such a style, that he that will read them must not run and read, but sit down and study." †

"It became the Holy Ghost, the penner of Scripture, to write in majesty, that the wits and wisdom of all the men in the world should bow before it." ‡

"The Scripture is delivered to us so, as we are rather delivered up to Scripture. . . . We are delivered up to Scriptures as they are to be our Masters, and not we theirs. As another Apostle's expression is: "We are to be doers of the

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\* Directions for the Profitable Reading of the Scriptures, p. 61.

† Works of John Lightfoot, Vol. 7, p. 208.

‡ Vol. 7, p. 212.



law and not judges; to be students of Scripture, and not their judges.”\*

“Ye know who say: ‘I will not believe the Scripture of themselves, unless they could show me their own authority.’ . . . Let them choose, whether they will believe it or no, may God say, but at their own peril. He never intended to satisfy every man’s curiosity and crossness and cavilling, but he hath given the Scripture in authority and majesty, and if men will bow and submit to it, well and good; and if not, let them see how they will answer it another day.”†

Thus it is conclusively shown what was the predominating opinion among the divines of the Westminster Assembly on this doctrine respecting the Holy Scriptures. With them inspiration meant verbal dictation by the Holy Spirit, and in view of that, it is inconceivable that they should have expressed in the Confession Dr. Briggs’s doctrine of the Holy Scripture. That doctrine they vigorously combated. And, while this opinion can have no possible binding force on our belief, it shows that if our standards are to be understood in their historical sense, a much stricter meaning must be given to their statements on inspiration than is here insisted on. When our standards were framed the Church believed in the infallible truthfulness of every word of Scripture, for the reason that the Holy Spirit was the author of it.

Of far greater importance to us than the opinions of the Westminster divines on this question, are the views of our American divines.

The citations I have made from the writings of Dr. Henry B. Smith fairly represent the view which has been held from the beginning in the American Presbyterian Church on the doctrine of Holy Scripture.

All the evangelical churches in the United States, indeed, have, without exception, until very recent times, avowed their

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\* Vol. 7, p. 213.

† Vol. 7, p. 213.

faith in the complete inspiration and the entire truthfulness of the written Word of God. President Timothy Dwight, speaking at the beginning of the present century, voiced the common sentiment of American christians when he said: "Whatever else may be false, all that God has declared is true; and it is to be received implicitly, by whatever human opinions it may be opposed. . . . 'Let God be true, but every man a liar.' Acknowledge His truth by giving implicit credit to His declarations. To believe a scriptural doctrine which we can explain, is not to confide in the veracity of God, but in our own explanation. This is not the evidence on which He originally requires us to believe. He demands that we give credit to His veracity, and that absolutely without reserve or qualification. If this be not done by us, our faith is radically defective. *All the declarations of God in Scripture are to be implicitly received, and they are to be received in their obvious meaning.*" \*

But this has particularly been the doctrine held by American Presbyterians, as the following excerpts from the works of a few of our leading divines will conclusively show. They believed it so thoroughly that they took it for granted in all their sermons and writings.

Dr. Jonathan Dickinson was born toward the close of the 17th Century. He was one of the principal founders of the College of New Jersey, a staunch defender of the Calvinistic faith, and being in his prime when our Standards were first adopted in 1729, he took a leading part in shaping the affairs of our Church at that time. Inheriting an intense love of liberty from his New England ancestry, he was opposed to assigning the highest authority to statements of doctrine by "*uninspired men*," and therefore exerted himself to make our Standards as broad as would be consistent with the truth of God's Word. But he recognized clearly the authority which

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\* Dwight's Sermons, Vol. I. pp. 27, 44.



attached to the writings of inspired men; and his words on the doctrine of Scripture express the belief of the Presbyterians of his day. He said: "The blessed book of God contains the immediate dictates of the Holy Ghost—2 Tim. iii. 16. Whatsoever, therefore, is written in the divine oracles, is witnessed by the Spirit himself; for He is the Author of them. And we must receive nothing as the *witness of the Spirit*, which is not agreeable to this sure and infallible standard and only sufficient rule of faith and practice." \*

President Samuel Davies, a little later in the 18th Century, contended that the statements of the Word of God were "the authentic declaration of Eternal Truth," on which alone a Christian should build his hope, since "the declarations of that Holy Word alone give us certain information;" and that "both the divinity and truth of Scripture" could be conclusively established by the combined forces of "intrinsic and extrinsic evidence."†

President Jonathan Edwards also expressed himself clearly and fully on this important question. He affirmed that matters of faith and morals and the historical narratives were alike from the Spirit of God.‡

"God," he said, "hath not left us to an uncertain guide; but hath Himself given us a revelation of the truth in these matters, and hath done very great things to convey and confirm to us this revelation; raising up many prophets in different ages, immediately inspiring them with the Holy Ghost, and confirming their doctrine with innumerable miracles or wonderful works out of the established course of nature, yea, he raised up a succession of prophets which were upheld for several ages. By means of all, God hath given us a book of divine instruction, which is the sum of divinity."§

He further states: "The spirit of error does not desire to

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\* Sermons and Tracts, by Jonathan Dickinson, p. 301.

† Davies' Sermons. *Hope of the Righteous, and Divine Authority of the Christian Religion.*

‡ Edwards's Works, Vol. 3, p. 544.

§ Edwards's Works, Vol. 4, p. 8.

beget a high opinion in men of the infallible rule. . . . The devil has ever shown a mortal spite toward that holy book, the Bible. . . . Every text in it is a dart to torment the old serpent. He has felt the stinging smart a thousand times; therefore he is enraged against the Bible, and hates every word of it. And, accordingly, we see it common in enthusiasts, that they depreciate the written rule, and set up the *light within* or some other rule above it.”\*

Let us now cite a few witnesses to speak for the faith of our Church at the period when our standards were finally adopted, as we have them now. Dr. Samuel Stanhope Smith said: “Here it is, that men introducing their own speculations and mingling their own philosophic systems with the Word of God, have corrupted its simplicity. . . . Are the Divine Scriptures then of doubtful interpretation? No, they are full of light. . . . They are a fountain of truth.”†

Dr. Alexander McWhorter, the beloved pastor of the First Church of Newark, stood in the front rank of the Presbyterian ministry of his day. He “was one of those eminent men who, in 1788, had the principal agency in settling the Confession of Faith and forming the constitution of the Presbyterian Church and in transferring the authority of the highest judicatory from the Synod to the General Assembly.”‡ His views on the doctrine of the Scriptures can therefore be regarded as fairly representative of the opinions of those who adopted our present Standards. He called the Scriptures “the holy oracles of God,” and in a sermon on inspiration he said: “Seeing the truth of Scripture can be established, as it were, by ocular demonstration, how should all be induced to search them \* \* \* steadfastly and perseveringly believe that all Scripture is given by inspiration of God.”§ On another occasion he said of the Bible that “it is styled God’s *law* because the Scrip-

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\* Edwards’s Works, Vol. 1, p. 542.

† Principles of Nature and Revealed Religion, p. 531.

‡ Sprague’s Annals of the American Presbyterian Pulpit, Vol. 1, p. 211.

§ McWhorter’s Sermons, Vol. 1, p. 34.



tures are given by the Supreme and sovereign Legislator—His *Way*, because they contain the order of His dispensations, and the course of man's obedience—His *Commandments*, because issued by the most absolute authority—His *Testimonies*, because attested or witnessed to the world by the most irrefragable evidence—His *Precepts*, because they are the prescriptions of heaven to man—His *Word*, because they are the declarations of His will—His *Judgments*, because by them we shall be judged—His *Righteousness*, because holy, just and good, and the standard of perfect justice—His *Statutes*, because fixed, immutable and of perpetual obligation—His *Truth*, because they are faithful sayings and founded on principles of eternal verity.” \*

The Rev. John Witherspoon, D. D., was also one of the most prominent and influential of our Presbyterian divines in the revision movement of 1785 to 1788. He was chairman of the committee “appointed to take into consideration the Constitution of the Church of Scotland and other Protestant Churches; and to form a complete system for the organization of the Presbyterian Church in the United States.” † In his extensive productions he so constantly takes for granted the full inspiration and the absolute divine authority of every word and sentence of Scripture that he nowhere combats the contrary view. All his references to the doctrine respecting the Bible are made in incidental ways, and are therefore all the more valuable as true indications of the faith of our Church on these questions at that time.

He speaks of the Word of God as “*the Scriptures of truth*,” from which virtue derives all its meaning and force; ‡ “*the Book of God*,” in which He himself speaks to men for their condemnation or approval; § “*God's written Word*,” wherein He hath clearly and explicitly written His name; ||

\* McWhorter's Sermons, Vol. 2, p. 107.

† Sprague's American Presbyterian Pulpit, Vol. 1, p. 14.

‡ Witherspoon's Works, Vol. 1, p. 69.

§ Witherspoon's Works, Vol. 1, p. 254.

|| Witherspoon's Works, Vol. 2, p. 49.

“*the Sacred Writings of inspired penmen,*” which make plain the absolute necessity of salvation through Christ;\* *The Inspired Writings* giving us “most certain proofs of true religion;”† “*the Sacred Volume consists of history*” which “is an improving study.”‡ He states: “There is a preciousness in every truth that hath the stamp of divine authority upon it, and therefore to neglect any of them and *count them trifling, or of little moment,* argues a want of reverence for the Word of God. The Holy Scriptures, as they are full and complete, containing everything that is necessary, so they *are perfect and faultless,* containing nothing unnecessary. Serious persons have often borne testimony to the great utility of such parts of the Sacred Oracles as are commonly treated with most indifference. Nay, I cannot help thinking that the veneration due to God, who doth nothing in vain, obliges us to believe the utility of those passages whose purpose we ourselves may not as yet have clearly perceived.”§ Manifestly, Dr. Witherspoon did not share in the views of Dr. Briggs in regard to circumstantials and non-essentials in Scripture.

The Rev. Ashbel Green, D. D., quoting this sentence from Dr. Dick on Inspiration approvingly, “It is most conformable to truth, that in their expressions as well as in their sentiments the writers of the Bible were under the infallible direction of the Spirit”—states further, that the Bible “can be satisfactorily accounted for in no other way than by saying that these writers were all guided by one and the same Spirit of infallible truth.”||

Nearly sixty years ago The Rev. Archibald Alexander, D.D., expressed himself in the following vigorous terms:

“There is something reprehensible, not to say impious, in that bold spirit of modern criticism which has led many emi-

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\* Witherspoon's Works, Vol. 1, p. 276.

† Witherspoon's Works, Vol. 1, p. 276.

‡ Witherspoon's Works, Vol. 1, p. 426.

§ Witherspoon's Works, Vol. 2, p. 243.

|| Lectures on the Shorter Catechism, Vol. 1, pp. 71, 79.



nent biblical scholars, especially in Germany, first to attack the authority of particular books of Scripture, and next to call in question the inspiration of the whole volume. To what extent the licentiousness of criticism has been carried, I need not say, for it is a matter of notoriety that of late the most dangerous enemies of the Bible have been found occupying the place of its advocates, and the critical art, which was intended for the correction of the text and the interpretation of the sacred books, has in a most unnatural way been turned against the Bible, and finally the inspiration of all the sacred books has not only been questioned, but scornfully rejected by *professors of theology*. And these men, while living on endowments which pious benevolence had consecrated for the support of religion, and openly connected with churches whose creeds contain orthodox opinions, have so far forgotten their high responsibilities and neglected the claim which the Church had on them, as to exert all their ingenuity and learning to sap the foundation of that system they were sworn to defend. They have had the shameless hardihood to send forth into the world books under their own names, which contain fully as much of the poison of infidelity as ever distilled from the pens of the most malignant deists whose writings have fallen as a curse on the world.”\*

Coming into the present century a little further, Dr. Gardiner Spring defines inspiration in the following discriminating manner: “With respect to matters of faith, both the matter and the words were inspired, and the writers of them were justly called the amanuenses of the Holy Ghost”; with respect to “Scripture facts handed down by written traditions and collected from other authentic sources, to them the writers were divinely directed, and in the presentation of them they were enabled, by the Divine Spirit, to distinguish the false from the true”; with respect to “things or facts directly perceived, seen and heard by the writers themselves, in recording them

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\* Preface to Canon of the Old and New Testaments. London Edition, pp. 7, 8.

the Divine Spirit assisted their memories, so that they put down what they did really see and hear. In one word, the God of heaven has given such a direction to the writers of this volume, that He is responsible for the book itself.”\*

Albert Barnes, referring to the perfection of the Holy Scripture, states: “The sacred writers were kept from error on those subjects which were matters of their own observation, or which pertained to memory, and that there were truths imparted to them directly by the Spirit of God, which they could never have arrived at by the unaided exercise of their own minds.”†

Again, he says: “God has borne witness in His Word, pledging His veracity as to the correctness of the statements which are thus made.”‡

Dr. Thomas H. Skinner calls the statements of Scripture “the outward witness of the Holy Spirit,” which is to be received as “perfect certitude,” for the reason that it is the Word of God.§

Thus it is seen that men of all “sides” and “schools” in the American Presbyterian Church have been in entire agreement in their views respecting the Holy Scripture. It will not be possible to cite a single individual of the long line of representative Presbyterian divines in our country, who has not held the belief of the plenary inspiration and absolute veracity of the written Word of God. And when the founders of the Presbyterian Church in this country adopted our Standards, they did so because they understood them to teach these doctrines respecting the Holy Scripture.

The Presbyterian Church in the United States of America, in its organized capacity, after searching discussion in 1728 and 1729, and again in the years from 1785 to 1788, adopted the Standards as we have them now, not because they were framed by the divines of the Westminster Assembly, but because they

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\* Bible not of Man, pp. 289, 290.

† Commentary on 2 Tim. iii. 16.

‡ Commentary on Psalm xix. 7.

§ Discussions in Theology, p. 270.



represented the belief of those adopting them, and especially their belief as to the Bible.

The subscription which we make to them was intended to be so true and full that, if a minister should change his views after having made the subscription, he should report that fact to Presbytery, in order that Presbytery may determine whether or not the changed views can be tolerated under the Confession.

Our Church has been very jealous of the purity of these Standards, and has insisted on a sincere acceptance of its doctrines for the reason that it has considered such an acceptance necessary to the maintenance of Bible truth.

The Assembly of 1824 adopted, among others, these resolutions :

“ That, though the Confession of Faith and Standards of our Church are of no original authority, independent of the Scriptures, yet we regard them as a summary of those Divine truths which are diffused throughout the sacred volume.

“ They, as a system of doctrine, therefore, cannot be abandoned in our opinion, without an abandonment of the Word of God. They form a bond of fellowship in the faith of the Gospel, and the General Assembly cannot but believe the precious immortals under their care to be more safe in receiving the truth of God’s holy Word, as exhibited in the Standards of our Church, than in being subjected to the guidance of any instructor, whoever he may be, who may have confidence enough to set up his own opinions in opposition to the system of doctrines which men of sound learning, full of the Holy Ghost, and mighty in the Scriptures, have devised from the Oracles of the living God. It should never be forgotten that the Church is solemnly cautioned against being carried about by every wind of doctrine.

“ This confession of Faith, adopted by our Church, contains a system of doctrine professedly believed by the people and the pastors under the care of the General Assembly, nor can it be traduced by any in the communion of our Church, without subjecting the erring parties to that salutary discipline

which hath for its object the maintenance of the peace and purity of the Church, under the government of her great Master." \*

It will thus be seen that the full literal inspiration of the written Word of God, and its entire truthfulness, has been held by the great majority of disciples in the true historical church of Jesus Christ from the days of the Apostles until now. The testimony in its favor has been unbroken. Only in comparatively modern times has there been even a respectable minority.

And it should be clearly understood that we are now asked to abandon a doctrine in regard to the contents and origin of the Holy Scripture which was taught by the Lord Jesus Christ Himself, reaffirmed by His Apostles, and has been believed by the great body of His true disciples from that day to the present time. And it should also be noted here that they have believed this doctrine to the exclusion of that advocated by Dr. Briggs. This doctrine of an errant Scripture has been known and urged all along the Christian centuries, but has been heretofore held only by heretics and infidels. It is plain that the issue was made as early as in Augustine's time. In a letter to Jerome he states: "For it seems to me that most disastrous consequences must follow upon our believing that anything false is found in the sacred books. That is to say, that the men by whom the Scriptures have been given to us, and committed to writing, did put down in those books anything false." †

In another letter, also to Jerome, he speaks still more plainly: "Then indeed without any fear of offense, sport is carried on as it were on the greensward: but I should marvel if *we* are not made sport of. For I say it frankly to your affection, I have learned to bestow upon *those* books of the Scriptures only which are now called canonical such reverence and honor as to believe with absolute positiveness that not any author of them has made any mistake in writing. And if I meet with anything in these writings which would seem to be

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\* Moore's Digest, p. 54.

† Augustine's Letters, London Edition, Vol. ii., p. 80.



in conflict with truth, I do not hesitate in saying that it is nothing else than that either a manuscript is faulty or that the exegete has not succeeded in getting at the sense of the words or that I have failed altogether in penetrating into the sense.

“Others, however, I read in such a manner that, no matter in respect to what sanctity of life and accuracy of scholarship they may be pre-eminent, I do not on that account deem it true because they themselves have so held; but because they were able to persuade (me) of that which is not foreign to truth, either through those canonical writers or through plausible proof, nor do I believe, my brother, that you think otherwise. I utterly refuse to believe, I say, that you wish to have your books read in such a manner as if they were those of the prophets and apostles; as to whose writings it is wicked (nefarium) to doubt that that they lack all error.”\*

The views of Origen and Jerome, as put in evidence by Dr. Briggs, do not show that they held that there are errors in the Scripture. This disposes of all the witnesses introduced by Dr. Briggs, in favor of an errant Bible, from the Fathers down to and including the Westminster divines.

That this has substantially been the unbroken belief of the Church of Jesus Christ until recent times, even among the most liberal members of the evangelical wing of it, is evident from a statement which Dr. Philip Schaff has made on the subject. He says: “The Bible is thoroughly human, though without error, in contents and form, in the mode of its rise, its compilation, its preservation, and transmission; yet at the same time thoroughly divine, both in its thoughts and words, in its origin, vitality, energy, and effect.”† And this shows as plainly as anything can, that the view which Dr. Briggs advocates as to the errancy of Scripture marks a clear departure from the ancestral faith.

It is a serious situation, especially since, in the place of the Scriptural doctrine, tolerance is sought for an unscriptural one which destroys the infallibility of the Bible, as a rule of faith and practice.

Dr. Briggs earnestly insists on an errant Scripture. But all the errors which he says biblical scholars find in the Bible have been known for generations. He has not given a single new

\* Migne Patrologiae Cursus Completus, Vol. xxxiii., Sancti A. Augustine Opera II., p. 275, Epistola 82.

† History of the Christian Church, First Edition, Vol. i., p. 93.

one. Those which he has given have again and again been shown by the great divines and biblical scholars of the Church to be no errors, but only discrepancies which can readily be accounted for. It is intimated that unless left to their freedom in this matter, the critics will, in self-defence, be obliged to publish a catalogue of the errors which they find in the Word of God. By all means, let the so-called errors be tabulated and published. Great good is certain to result from it. For one thing, it will relieve uncertainty, which is always painful.

And then, also, the publication of the so-called errors is sure to call to the front devout scholars who will readily show them to be no errors at all, and explain them successfully in harmony with the received doctrine.

Infidels have long desired to find errors and difficulties in the Word of God, such as would destroy its claim to divine inspiration and authority, and to its infallible truthfulness, and if they were to be found, we may be sure they would have been published long ago.

The doctrine remains unshaken. There is not only no reason for abandoning it, but every reason for clinging to it more firmly, since by new discoveries made in Bible lands, one difficulty after another disappears, until only a remnant remains. The hardest tests have been applied to the Bible, often most recklessly, endeavoring in every possible way to invalidate its inspiration and truthfulness, but that inspiration and truthfulness are unimpeached. There are textual difficulties, but they do not prove that there were errors in the original Scriptures. Difficulties "are vanishing factors in the progressive series of argument; they leave but a minimum of doubt against a maximum of proof." Years ago Coleridge conceded "that the errors in detail may be reduced to some half score of apparent discrepancies,—'a petty breach, or a rat-hole in the walls of the temple.'" And it would probably never have occurred to any one but the higher critics, that breaches and rat-holes were a part of the original temple.

The claim made by Dr. Briggs, therefore, that the doctrine of the full inspiration of the written Word of God, and its entire truthfulness, is a modern notion and not the doctrine of the Bible and the Church, is wholly without foundation. It is the doctrine which the living Church of Christ has held through all the Christian centuries. It is particularly the doctrine of the Scripture itself, as set forth in the Standards of our Church,



from which Professor Briggs has so widely departed. He has set up in its place another doctrine, according to which, we cannot say, in a real sense, that the written Bible is inspired, since the entire text of it is only of human origin, and its contents are pervaded by numerous errors. He does not receive as true what is written in the Scripture, because it is the Word of God in the sense that the God of truth is the author of it; but he receives some things in them as true for the reason that some standard in himself approves them as true. It may be "the reason trained and strained," rising to the height of its energies, and so putting us in possession of the truth and power of the Bible.

But, whatever it be, Dr. Briggs's theory is contrary to the true doctrine of inspiration, and not only destroys the infallibility of the Bible as the rule of faith and practice, but subordinates it as well to a subjective standard by which it is to be determined, first of all, how much of Scripture we will receive as the truth of God, and it ought therefore to be condemned by this Presbytery.

#### *GENUINENESS AND AUTHENTICITY.*

The fourth and fifth charges refer to the genuineness and authenticity of the Pentateuch and the book of Isaiah. Dr. Briggs admits the facts given in the specifications on which the prosecution relies to sustain the charges, but he denies that the charges are sustained by them. He affirms, on the contrary, that his views on these questions are contrary neither to the Scripture nor to the Standards, and especially not to the integrity, credibility and self-evidencing character of the Holy Scripture. It is for the court to decide whether or not these claims of Dr. Briggs are correct in the light of Scripture and the Standards.

Let me say at the outset that the fact that the Epistle to the Hebrews, the books of Esther, Kings, Chronicles and others, may have no known authors has no bearing on the question. The Bible claims no particular author for any of these books. The fact that all the Psalms were not written by David also has no relevancy here, for the Bible assigns some of the Psalms to other authors. What we claim is that, when the Bible does assign an author to a particular book, its decision must be regarded as final

1. *We will give our attention first to the Pentateuch. Dr.*

Briggs declares that, as an assured result of scientific investigation, Moses is not the author of the Pentateuch. For upward of 3,000 years God's people have believed that, so far as human agency is concerned, the Pentateuch is the work of Moses. An ancient belief like this, which is universal, accredited by the highest testimony, and transmitted through reliable channels, cannot be thrown aside without the clearest evidence of its untrustworthiness. It is not denied that Moses may have had many ancient documents and worked them into his own writings, especially in the composition of Genesis; nor that he may have employed amanuenses; nor that editorial glosses of later editions may have crept into the text, notably the account of Moses' death; but it is asserted that the Pentateuch, substantially as it now exists, with its different legislative codes and its veritable contemporaneous history, is to be ascribed to Moses as its author.

An edition of the writings of Chaucer, put into modern English and interspersed with editorial glosses, would be, in every proper sense, assigned to the authorship of Chaucer. In precisely the same way is Moses believed to be the author of the Pentateuch. This belief cannot be set aside by putting upon it the stigma of being based on mere tradition. It is true that tradition is not always reliable. But let it be remembered that the most trustworthy historical events are not capable of mathematical demonstration. They rest on probable evidence. And a tradition concerning events of the distant past, if it be received from trustworthy sources of information, be uniform, uninterrupted and universal, and have the unbroken support of national writers of the highest credibility and of the purest moral aims, commends itself to our belief on the most reliable historical evidence. This is true of the Mosaic authorship of the Pentateuch. And this tradition is still more worthy of our acceptance, since, as we shall see, it has the unqualified indorsement of the Holy Scriptures.

We have placed before you in the indictment a series of texts which give us some of the direct testimony of Scripture itself on this question. These show that the Pentateuch claims



for itself a Mosaic authorship; that it was written before the death of Moses and then placed in the hands of Joshua; that in the period of the Kings, it was regarded as having the highest divine authority; and that in the time of Ezra and Nehemiah it was an ancient book, greatly venerated. Daniel bears testimony to the estimate placed on it in his day.

This is the direct testimony which the Old Testament bears to the Mosaic authorship of the Pentateuch. The indirect testimony to the same effect is very much stronger.

It is impossible properly to understand the other books of the Old Testament except on the supposition of the existence of the history, laws and truths of the Pentateuch during the period which they respectively cover. The Pentateuch pervades every phase of the life of Israel through all those times. The Book of Ruth is confessedly ancient, but the civil, social and religious life revealed in it cannot be satisfactorily explained, except on the supposition that the laws of the Pentateuch were in practical operation at that time.

*Consider now that the historical character of the Pentateuch is vitally bound up with its Mosaic authorship.* The two stand or fall together. If the Pentateuch claims for itself a Mosaic authorship, and that claim should be proven to be false, it would lose its historical character and pass into the region of invention and legend. And it will not be denied that, on the face of it, the Pentateuch lays claim to such an authorship, it being conceded that Genesis has a common author with the other four books.

Critics like Kuenen admit that the Pentateuch claims to have Moses for its author. \*

Bleek positively affirms that: "On this point *there can be no doubt* that the laws as we find them in these books all claim to be Mosaic in origin." †

And I repeat, if this claim be not correct, then the Pentateuch gives us no true history. What appears to be history is

\* The Hexateuch, pp. 18-24.

† Introduction to the Old Testament, Vol. I, p. 203.

merely fiction, the literary form, the histrionic dress, to set off with effect the codes contained in it. The laws must either have been given by Moses in the desert, as it is stated, or they were merely put into his mouth by a clever writer.

Let us now observe that Christ and his Apostles treat the Pentateuch as credible history. Thus our Lord accepts as genuine history the account of the creation; of Noah and the Flood; of Sodom and Gomorrah; of the calling of Moses; of the brazen serpent; of the giving of manna from heaven, and of the giving by Moses of several of the Pentateuchal laws.\*

In the same way the Apostles treated as actual historical occurrences, and enforced doctrines and duties from them, the account of the creation of man and woman; of Noah and the Flood; of the destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah; the story of Balaam; the lives of the Patriarchs; the account of the Exodus; and in passages like the seventh and thirteenth chapters of Acts, and the entire Epistle to the Hebrews, the Pentateuch is assumed to be true in all its parts, like the historic facts on which Christianity is founded.†

In regard to considerable portions of the Pentateuch, it is positively affirmed that Moses wrote them.‡ Written books and laws are also mentioned, of which, by fair implication, Moses was the author.§ It is also worthy of notice that at the command of Jehovah, Moses wrote religious history before the law was given on Sinai.||

But it is not claimed that these positive statements are suf-

\* Matt. xix. 4, 5; xxiv. 37-39; Luke xvii. 28, 29, 32; Mark xii. 26; John iii. 14; vi. 32; Matt. viii. 4; Mark vii. 10; John vii. 22, 23. See also Matt. xv. 4, 5 and xix. 7, 8.

† 1 Tim. ii. 13, 14; 1 Cor. xi. 8, 9; 1 Pet. iii. 20; 2 Pet. ii. 6, 7; ii. 15, 16; Rom. iv. 1-3, 11; ix. 7-13; Gal. iii. 6-8; iv. 22-31; 1 Pet. iii. 6; 1 Cor. x. 1-10; Acts xiii. 17, 18; 2 Cor. iii. 7-13.

‡ Exodus xvii. 4; xxiv. 4; xxxiv. 28; Num. xxxiii. 2; Deut. xxxi. 9, 24.

§ Exodus xxiv. 7; Deut. xxxi. 26; xxviii. 58, 61; xxix. 20, 26; xxx. 10.

|| Exodus xvii. 4.



ficient to prove the Mosaic authorship of the entire Pentateuch. However, since it is unusual for an author to intersperse his writings with repeated claims of their authorship, some scholars have considered them sufficient to establish that point.

But we desire here only to call attention to the fact that in the book itself considerable sections are assigned directly to the pen of Moses; and to the further fact that Moses is the only man mentioned whom the Lord used to write those truths which He desired to transmit in permanent form to his Church and the world. These two facts, taken in connection with the testimony of a tradition which is unbroken and universal, raise a strong presumption in favor of the Mosaic authorship substantially of the entire document. And as strongly confirmatory of that position, in an indirect way, it should be mentioned, in passing, that the writer of this composition, especially of Genesis and Exodus, is acknowledged to have been a learned Hebrew, who had an intimate acquaintance with Arabian and Egyptian affairs. There is no man known who meets that condition more exactly than Moses.

But there is another line of evidence in favor of the direct claim of the Pentateuch itself for its Mosaic authorship which is simply overwhelming. To this your attention is now directed. In the so-called middle books, from the third chapter of Exodus to the end of Numbers, we have a vast body of laws, regulations and directions in the form of revelations from Jehovah to His servant Moses. These revelations were so numerous, extended to such a minuteness and variety of detail, and were so largely designed for the intermediate practice of the people that, for their proper understanding and promulgation among them, there was an absolute necessity of reducing them immediately to writing. And furthermore, the sections which indicate Moses by name as the human source of the contents of these middle books, come so close together, there being often two or more of them in the same chapter, that it amounts to special pleading to deny the Mosaic source of the intervening portions. Leviticus alone has sixty references to its Mosaic authorship.

The first verse of Deuteronomy gives the title to the whole book, and to affirm that it does not all along claim on the face of it to be the production of Moses, results in a mere war of words. Moses is referred to in Deuteronomy more than twenty-five times as the author of it, and yet Dr. Briggs calls it a pseudonym.\*

It is expressly stated that the Lord said to Moses: "*But as for thee, stand thou here by me, and I will speak unto thee all the commandments, and the statutes, and the judgments, which thou shalt teach them, that they may do them in the land which I give them to possess it.*" Then it is written that "*Moses wrote all the words of the Lord,*" as well as "their goings out according to the commandment of the Lord." It would indeed have been impossible for Moses to have taught these ordinances to the people, and to put them in permanent form for their guidance in the promised land, unless he had written them down as the document states he did. And that view is greatly strengthened by the fact that in the other books of the Old Testament the people are directed to observe the laws of Moses, and that their confession of sin almost invariably took the form of owning that they had done contrary to the commandments, statutes and ordinances which the Lord had given them by the hand of His servant Moses. As soon as the great lawgiver was dead Joshua was directed by God, "to do according to all the law which Moses my servant commanded thee; turn not from it to the right hand or to the left." He was charged to "meditate day and night in the book of the law; that thou mayest *observe to do according to all that is written* therein." This position receives still further strength from the fact, which should not escape our observation here, that soon after the departure of Moses theophany ceased in a measure, and the Israelites became the people of the Book. God required them to guide their conduct, after that, by those truths and regulations which He had made known to Moses, and which Moses had written in a book for their direction. This is furthermore directly confirmed by the statement of Luke in the book of Acts, that Moses received "*the lively*

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\* Bib. Study, p. 224.



*oracles*” from the Lord for the purpose of giving them to the Jewish people. \*

This direct claim of the Pentateuch that Moses was the author of it, is strongly fortified by an abundance of indirect evidence which is found also in the document itself. A large number of the laws and regulations which are contained in the Pentateuch, cannot be understood and would indeed be meaningless, except from the historical background of the Mosaic age, and of the journey of Israel through the wilderness under the leadership of Moses, when the people dwelt in tents, and when Aaron and Eleazar were priests. †

If now we combine the direct and indirect evidence which the Pentateuch gives concerning itself, we have in it overwhelming testimony in favor of its own claim that the great mass of Pentateuchal writings, the historical narratives as well as the legal codes, is, in its matter, substance and essential form, to be credited to the authorship of Moses.

In his response to the charges of the prosecuting committee Dr. Briggs states : “Though Moses be not the author of the Pentateuch, yet Mosaic history, Mosaic institutions and Mosaic legislation lie at the base of all the original documents, and the name of Moses pervades the Pentateuch as a sweet fragrance, and binds the whole together with irresistible attraction into an organism of divine law.” ‡

But the Pentateuch gives a different account of itself. It claims Moses, not merely as a sweet, pervading fragrance, not merely as the author of a few of the germinal laws of its codes, but as a living personal presence from whom, either as author or medium, the great bulk, at least, of its contents was given. It presents him as the grand personality who inspired and directed everything. And if Mosaic history, institutions and legislation merely “lie at the base of all the original documents, and the name of Moses pervades the Pentateuch as a

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\* Acts vii. 38.

† Leviticus, chapters i. to vii. Exodus, chapters xxv. to xxxi. Leviticus, x. 1, and following: xi. 13, 18; xiii. 46; xiv. 2, 3, 8 (33-53); Leviticus, chapter xvi. Numbers, chapters i., ii., iv., ix., and x.

‡ Response to Charges, p. 21.

sweet fragrance" only, then its own story must be taken at a vast discount; its genuineness discarded, and thus its credibility will be effectually destroyed, since any document proven to make false claims and shown not to be genuine, is universally held to be untrustworthy.

If Moses is not the author of the Pentateuch then the writer of it perpetrated a fraud, and a fraud so cunningly devised that it has deceived completely the people of God and in fact the whole world, for thousands of years, and deceived also Christ and his Apostles, unless they connived at it.

And further, if the things related in the Pentateuch as historic facts, and treated so by Christ and His Apostles, are really not such, then the teachings of a considerable portion of the Gospels, Acts, Epistles, and almost the whole of Hebrews, particularly the eleventh chapter, with its long list of the noble heroes of the faith, rest on legends, and that fact cannot fail to invalidate the general trustworthiness, not only of the Pentateuch, but of the entire Scriptures, as a rule, in faith and life. It is sure to shake the faith of man in the truthfulness of the whole Bible.

Take into consideration, now, the further fact that Christ and the Apostles unqualifiedly gave their testimony in favor of the Mosaic origin of the Pentateuch.\* Both Josephus and Philo make it clear that when any of the terms, "*the Law*," "*the Law of Moses*," "*the Book of Moses*," and "*Moses' writings*," were used by the Jews of that time, the entire Pentateuch was meant.†

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\* Matt. 8: 4; 19: 7, 8; 22: 24 (with Mark 12: 19 and Luke 20: 28); Matt. 23: 2; Mark 7: 10; 10: 3, 4; 12: 26; Luke 2: 22; 16: 29, 31; 20: 37; 24: 44; John 1: 17, 45; 5: 45, 46; 6: 32; 7: 22, 23; Acts 3: 22; 6: 14; 7: 37; 13: 39; 15: 1, 5, 21; 26: 22; 28: 23; Rom. 10: 5, 19; 1 Cor. 9: 9; 2 Cor. 3: 15; Heb. 7: 14; 9: 19; 10: 28.

† *Josephus* states: "All our constitution depends on Moses our legislator."

"For we have not an innumerable multitude of books, disagreeing from and contradicting one another (as the Greeks have), but only 22 books, which contain the records of all past times, which are justly claimed to be divine, and of them five belong to Moses, which contain his laws and the tradition of the origin of mankind until his death."—Whiston's *Josephus*, pp. 30, 861.

*Philo* said: "We find, then, that in the sacred oracles delivered by the prophet Moses, there are three kinds of characters; for a portion of them relates to the creation of the world, a portion is historical, and a third portion is legislative." On the next page he makes it plain that in that description he includes the entire Pentateuch.—*Philo's Work*, Bohn's Edition. Vol. 3, p. 456.



Dr. Bleek states that in the time of Christ it was the universal belief that Moses was the author of the entire Pentateuch.\* When, therefore, Christ and the Apostles referred to the law and writings of Moses, they knew that they were understood to endorse the Mosaic authorship of the Pentateuch. This, as teachers and lovers of the truth, as honest men, they could not have done if they knew that Moses did not produce those writings. They looked on Moses not only as a great historic person, but supposed him to be a law-giver, and an author, who left writings behind him, in which he wrote about Christ; and these laws and writings of Moses, in their view, make up the Pentateuch. In ascribing to Moses the Patriarchal institution of circumcision, † the account of the burning bush, ‡ and laws like that of divorce, § Christ credits Moses with being the author of the Pre-Mosaic, the historical and the legislative portions of the Pentateuch. To say that they simply employed conventional modes of expression, is to evade the natural and legitimate import of their statements.

The entire fabric and make-up of the Scripture then rest on the historical character and Mosaic origin of the Pentateuch. All the writers of the Scripture testified either directly or indirectly that Moses was the author of it. Manifestly they fully believed it, and many parts of the Bible are meaningless if that is not the case. Above all, the Mosaic authorship of the Pentateuch is indorsed by the Lord Jesus Christ himself, the world's one true Prophet, the Faithful and True witness. This also is the doctrine of our Confession of Faith. In Section 2d of the 19th Chapter, it is distinctly affirmed that God delivered the moral law on Mount Sinai; and in the 3d Section, that He gave the ceremonial law to the people of Israel, as a Church under age, which evidently refers to their life in the desert.

Against this united stand of the authors of the Holy Scrip-

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\* Bleek's Introduction to the Old Testament, Vol. I., p. 192.

† John 7, 22.

‡ Mark 12, 26.

§ Mark 10, 5.

ture, Dr. Briggs affirms that the higher criticism, by means of scientific investigation, has reached the "certain result" \* that the Pentateuch is not of Mosaic origin. It belongs to that "great mass of the Old Testament" which "was written by authors whose names or connection with their writings are lost in oblivion." † Dr. Briggs declares the Pentateuch to be an "*anonymous*" book, whose authenticity and genuineness are maintained by blind traditionalists. ‡ This is one of the obstructions which keep men from the Bible, and which must be destroyed. It is one of the things in reference to which he states, of himself and his fellow critics: "We have undermined the breastworks of traditionalism; let us blow them to atoms. We have forced our way through the obstructions; let us remove them from the face of the earth;" § and so the "victorious army of the critics" is determined to force its opinions on the Church. These be swelling words, and bold, but none too bold, if *true*. Let us see if any known facts bear out this vaunting assertion.

Dr. Briggs identifies himself with the higher criticism, and accepts the results attained by it, in regard to the matter in hand, as established facts. He does not go the whole length of the advanced radical party of critics, but claims to hold a conservative position. He does not believe as thoroughly in this criticism as the authors of it do, but accepts the principles of it as sound, and holds essentially that its conclusions in respect to the Pentateuch are true.

What, then, is the position of this criticism in regard to the origin and composition of the Pentateuch? Briefly stated it is this: The Pentateuch is the product of a number of independent authors. It contains three conflicting and irreconcilable codes, the earliest of which did not originate until after the times of Moses — some say, not until hundreds of years afterward. Dr. Driver, whose last book Dr. Briggs has in-

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\* Inaugural Address, p. 23.

† Inaugural Address, p. 23.

‡ Biblical Study, pp. 222, 223.

§ Inaugural Address, p. 41.



roduced to the American public under his own imprimatur without dissent, and whose views on this subject he therefore fathers, states that the oldest Pentateuchal document, J E, sometimes called the prophetic document, was produced not earlier than 400 years after the times of Moses, perhaps not earlier than 700 years after; that Deuteronomy was written 750 years after Moses; and that the Priest-Code, comprising more than two-thirds of the contents of the Pentateuch, was written about 1,000 years subsequent to Mosaic times. This is substantially the view of Dr. Briggs, as shown by the documents put in your hands by him. Right here it is worthy of notice that the laws of this Priest-Code were by Christ and the writers of the New Testament ascribed to Moses.\* These writings, so say the critics, were put together by learned scribes, who acted as redactors, and made emendations and additions of their own. They did their work but passably well, and hence the narrative portion of the document is full of anachronisms and contradictions. Most of the references to Moses in the wilderness, if not all, and the utterances of Jehovah, are mere literary accommodations to give a becoming form to the composition. And to get at the real facts and truth of the book we must consult the verdict of the higher criticism.

Most of the higher critics would banish the divine element altogether. Indeed the theory of the higher criticism largely owes its origin to the assumption that the existence of the supernatural in the Holy Scripture, especially in the earlier records of it, destroys its historical credibility. The rest of the higher critics minimize the supernatural element. But Dr. Briggs retains it, and he would have us believe that the Pentateuch, made up as we have described, is yet an inspired book. I can conceive how, with Dr. Briggs's view of inspiration, it possibly might still be that. But a work so produced could not possibly be considered as inspired, according to the biblical view of inspiration, since it would make the Spirit of God the author of what is false, no matter what the motives of the writers of the Pentateuch may

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\* Matt. viii. 4; Heb. ix. 19.

have been. If hundreds of years after the age of Moses they wrote their own ideas into this document, and then palmed them off as having been given by Moses himself, the whole thing is a fraud; and we cannot, consistently with the perfect rectitude and truthfulness of God, credit His Spirit with such work. Nor does it in the least relieve the matter to call it a "*pious fraud*." The question is, could an inspired writer deliberately deceive? And therefore there is a general demand among the higher critics for a reconstruction of the doctrine of inspiration. The higher criticism cannot well use its methods on a divine text. It insists on treating the Bible like any other human production.

These results of the higher criticism have been reached by means of a very subtle, minute, and profound investigation of the language and literature of the Pentateuch, a process of experts, so deep and searching, they inform us, that not only are men of an ordinarily liberal education unable to comprehend it; but, what is still more curiously wonderful, that they themselves, with their immense learning, are not able to make it plain to the best scholars outside of their own number.

It is claimed that we ought to have confidence enough in the higher critics to accept their conclusions as true, since they are experts in these matters. The only difficulty about this is, that the critics do not agree, and we know that experts are the worst pathologists in the world, and are suspected of killing more patients than the ordinary practitioners.

Dr Briggs assures us, indeed, that one can accept the results of this criticism and still be a good Presbyterian, loyal to both Scripture and Confession. And it will be agreed to by all that, while it may seem impossible for one holding such views to continue longer to be a Presbyterian, to say nothing more, yet this question must ultimately be decided on what is the real honest truth in the matter. And if it can be shown that these destructive results are true then they must and will be accepted, and Presbyterians will not be behind their fellow-Christians of other communions in accepting them,

If what has been regarded as the most trustworthy history of antiquity, distinguished from all contemporaneous literature



by its matchless purity, elevation and majesty, can be shown to be false, and if it can be made clear that the grand heroes whose examples have given inspiration to the men and women of many centuries are only the fanciful creations of a fertile oriental brain, much and deeply as we may mourn the loss, we must adjust our thoughts and faith to that state of things.

When entering on this study, one is astonished at learning that the critics have discovered only facts and difficulties which have been known for at least a hundred years. Nothing new confronts them. Eichhorn, whom they are so fond of quoting, had in his possession all the facts which they have, and yet he, in spite of those facts, most ably defended the Mosaic authorship of the Pentateuch. \*

But the critics have changed their position in relation to the old facts, and have concluded to use new methods and investigate the Biblical compositions on the basis of a new hypothesis. This hypothesis rests on a series of conjectures, evolved from the instincts of the critics, and directed, shaped and applied as their fancies may dictate. They take the simple and connected narrative of the Pentateuch, and, according to their conjectural rules in regard to expression and style, cut it up into small fragments, transpose and rearrange them until the composition is so mixed up that it has more the appearance of a crazy quilt than of anything else. Having arbitrarily assumed that certain words and forms of expression belong exclusively to certain writers, they divide the Pentateuch on the basis of that assumption. When, therefore, the partition has been made, they find, naturally enough, that it corresponds exactly with the conjectural theory.

So certain are they of the correctness of this hypothesis that if, having assigned a certain fragment to one author, they happen to discover some word or peculiarity in it, which they have before decided to be the exclusive property of another author, the verse, or section, containing it, is likely to be declared an interpolation, and must therefore be transferred to its proper place.

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\* *Einleitung in das Alte Testament*, §§ 3-11.

This illustrates the method by which these destructive conclusions concerning the Pentateuch are reached.

But these conclusions thus reached are in the highest degree improbable.

It is impossible to determine anything with certainty about the style and peculiarities of an author from single words and short sentences. No author in any age of the world has either had a monopoly of certain words and expressions, as against all others, or been confined to their use. It is an unwarrantable assumption that a Hebrew writer in ancient times could express his thoughts in only one form. The theory reasons throughout on a low and misleading plane, and, by means of uncertain guesses, makes divisions and difficulties where really none exist. To show that I am not overstating the matter let me cite the application of these critical processes to the 14th Chapter of Genesis:

“We are told . . . . that this chapter is derived from a different source from those which precede and follow, because it does not contain the least hint of the wickedness of the men of Sodom; and because, conversely, the author of Chapters 18 and 19 knows nothing whatever of the conquest of the five cities, nor of the rescue of their inhabitants by Abraham. It is also distinguished from the other chapters by marked linguistic peculiarities, and forms a part of the general history of nations, unlike other narratives about Abraham.”

But here the doctors differ. Dillman thinks that, “since, in other respects than those alluded to, it agrees with other portions of Genesis in language, and also contains references to other sections as well as explanatory glosses, it must be regarded as a very old story, which has been incorporated by one of the three narrators, J, E, or P. Elohim in v. 18 would point to E or P, and since this section does not agree with P’s ordinary mode of describing such things, nor with the language peculiar to P, therefore it is to be assigned to E. Yahwe, in v. 22, is probably an interpolation. The redactor, however, added to the original form of the story such explanatory remarks as are found in vv. 2, 3, 7, &c., and worked into it vv.



17-20, which can only have been written by a member of the Kingdom of Judah, whereas E belonged to the northern Kingdom. Kuenen, on the other hand, calls this a fragment of a post-exilic version of Abraham's life worked by the redactor, and asserts categorically that it does not belong to J E, from which it differs in point of form, besides being excluded by Chapter 18. Neither can it be taken from P, although containing some of P's characteristic words, for it falls outside the scope of that work and is written in a wholly different style." \*

This, we are soberly told, is scientific scholarship, the results of which must not be disputed. But such a method of criticism suggests the query rather, whether the results of it are not worthy more of ridicule than respect.

But again, wholly unmindful of the different conditions, and the different intent in and for which they were enacted, the critics create positive contradictions between the different codes of the Pentateuch, when, in view of all the circumstances, a unity can readily be traced through them all, and sufficient reasons given for their differences and for their origin at the times indicated in the document. If we concede the existence of three different codes of laws in the Pentateuch, their differences can be more readily adjusted on the basis of the traditional view than on that of the higher criticism. If we allow our minds to be carried along by the simple narrative, it will readily occur to us that the first stratum of laws, given three months after the Exodus, contains the "*rough sketch*" of the legislation of the coming theocratic government; that the second stratum of laws were given by Jehovah to the Hebrews as the permanent code of theocratic rule in the wilderness, and that the third stratum was a popular presentation of this theocratic law, given forty years later, just before entrance into Canaan, and specifically adapted to the agricultural life on which they were about to enter. This perfectly natural view of the matter gives unity and consistency to the whole docu-

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\* Pentateuchal Criticism, pp. 320, 321.

ment. Nor is it so difficult to show that the form of the narrative is a credible one.

It lies as a strong presumption against the higher criticism that it creates divisions where harmony really exists. Any fair theory is bound to adopt an interpretation of a document which is in harmony with the facts and claims of the document itself, if that interpretation can be shown to be at all reasonable. That the Pentateuch can be reasonably interpreted in harmony with its own claims, is evident from the fact that this has been the belief of God's people for 3,000 years, and has commended itself to a large number of ripe scholars, during all that time. It is open to the higher critics to find, by all fair means, a better solution of difficulties if possible, but they have so multiplied and exaggerated the difficulties as to discredit the methods they employ.

It ought to occur to the higher critics that truth is simple, clear as light, and easily made intelligible to ordinary people; and that, if they are burdened with a great truth, it is incumbent on them to exhibit this truth to the Church and the world, in all its simplicity; and especially, since this is a question of faith, to make it plain by Scripture proof. As Presbyterians we believe in settling everything by an appeal to the Word of God, the "*infallible truth*" and "*divine authority*" of which are evidenced by "*the consent of all the parts.*" Our Confession states: "The infallible rule of interpretation of Scripture is Scripture itself; and, therefore, when there is a question about the true and full sense of any Scripture (which is not manifold, but one) it may be searched and known by other places that speak more clearly." \*

On the face of it, the Scriptures testify strongly against the results of this criticism; but if we are in error about that, the critics ought to point out the places in Scripture which make their view more clear. Again, it weighs strongly against the probable truthfulness of these critical results that the Pentateuch contains, not only a revelation from God to his people,

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\* Confession of Faith, Chap. i. Sec. 9.



but is *the record by which that revelation is communicated* and certified to them. Hence it is that this portion of Scripture is spoken of in the Bible as the *testimony of Jehovah*, the righteousness of which is everlasting, which is the heritage of his people, and so very sure that it may be implicitly trusted.\*

This certainly cannot be affirmed of a record so faulty that even the learned critics are not able to determine the exact residuum of truth in it. Such testimony cannot be very sure, and it is scarcely conceivable that the infinitely good and truthful God would have embodied it in so deceptive a form, especially since it was so necessary to have it plainly understood.

But further the theory of the higher criticism is not consistent with itself. If Moses lived in a rough and cruel age, as the critics affirm; if he was not a conspicuous and grand figure in the history of Israel, but simply the semi-barbarous chieftain of a horde of uncivilized people, and if but few if any laws came really from his hands, then there could have been neither reason nor motive for his compatriots of a later age to seek the authority of his name for the enforcement of laws and customs. If Moses did not make the grand position and gain the commanding influence for himself by the conspicuous part which he played at the beginning of the Jewish nation, as recorded in the Pentateuch, it could be no commendation of a statute to have his name appended to it.

Moreover, the narrative of the Pentateuch proceeds in a way so simple, straightforward, and apparently so truthful, and with such accuracy of minute detail in the delineation of history, biography, incidents, experiences, customs, that really no one but a contemporary, personally familiar with the life and circumstances of the people, could have written it. Let any one sit down and read consecutively the last four books of the Pentateuch with an unbiased mind, and he will come to the almost irresistible conclusion that the events and laws contained therein were written down from time to time on the spot as they

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\* Psalm 19: 7; 78: 5; 119: 31, 111, 144.

occurred and were delivered. Had the scribe, who is supposed to have drawn up the Pentateuch in the times of Josiah, Ezra, or some other distant post-Mosaic period, been even more learned than our higher critics, he could not have been so exactly true to Israelitish and Egyptian life. If he really did that, his literary aptitude was marvelous beyond all experience.

Herodotus was no mean historian for his day, and is at present coming into favor again with the critics. He lived about the time of Ezra, but it is well known that his account of Egyptian life contains many inaccuracies. He was too far removed in time to picture the details of life correctly.

The Pentateuch is the product of a contemporary, and since the personality of Moses prevades the whole, and the document bears the stamp of his character, it points unerringly to him as the veritable author. He was the one man of the time so trained, and so placed by divine Providence, as to be best fitted to perform such a literary task. He had the best education which the most enlightened nation then afforded. He lived at a time when there was a high degree of literary culture both in Egypt and Syria, and when a set of beautifully formed Semitic letters, suitable for such a literary work, had been invented. Such a combination of favorable circumstances did not exist in those post-Mosaic periods to which the critics would assign the origin of the Pentateuch. And yet in the face of all this, the critics deny that the Pentateuch was produced in the one age when every condition favored its production, and that it originated from the one man who was in every way most qualified to be its author. These facts of history justly throw grave doubts on the correctness of the conclusions of the critics.

When the writer of a document relates facts which are found to be in perfect harmony with the contemporaneous life, customs and incidents of the people concerning whom he writes, showing that he had an accurate acquaintance with those matters of which he treats, his writings become invested with the highest degree of historical credibility. And when the statements which he makes concerning the people of whom he



writes, are further corroborated by the history and traditions of other peoples, especially if of hostile peoples, then that credibility rises to a degree of probability which is not very different from certainty.

A high degree of credibility must be accorded to the writings of the Pentateuch from its minutely truthful representations of the contemporaneous life of the Hebrew people ; and when, now, the ever-accumulating facts brought to light by modern researches in Syria, along the Euphrates Valley, and especially in Egypt, corroborate the correctness of the things narrated in the Pentateuch, it becomes invested with a degree of probability which gives assurance of truthfulness. The Mosaic authorship of the Pentateuch is thus seen to be supported by the best canons of historical criticism. No wonder the higher critics are as silent as the grave about recent discoveries in Asia and Egypt. These discoveries completely overturn their conjectures. The spades used on those ancient fields constantly bring to light new facts which confirm the exact truthfulness of Old Testament history.

An instructive instance of this is furnished by some recently discovered facts to which Professor Sayce, of Oxford, has called attention. The higher critics have uniformly declared that the Melchisedek of Genesis is a myth. But, now, writings of this very Melchisedek have been dug up on the shores of the Nile, in which he speaks of the city of Jerusalem of which he was the prince.\* And thus the 14th chapter of Genesis is shown to be not legend, as the critics affirm, but veritable history.

Yet, in the face of all this testimony, and in spite of all probabilities to the contrary, the critics, with whom Dr. Briggs takes his stand, deny the Mosaic authorship of the Pentateuch. The voice of history must be silenced, the testimony of the Scriptures, of Christ and the Apostles must be discredited, that the conjectures which the critics have evolved from their own consciousness may be regarded as inerrant.

But Dr. Briggs tells us that the conclusions of the higher

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\* Public Opinion, December, 1891.

criticism are approved by consensus of the scholars who are experts in this matter.

He has given us the names of 147 biblical scholars as witnesses in favor of his views. It is difficult to see how the opinions of these scholars can be allowed to influence our judgment in the matter before us in any way. It is no new thing for biblical scholars in European universities to take erroneous views of Holy Scripture. 'The only new thing about it is that these names should be cited as authority in a court of the Presbyterian Church. In that list of 147 names there are some evangelicals, but we must take the term evangelical in a very broad sense respecting most of them. Some names, like F. H. Krüger, C. H. H. Wright, and P. Ray Palmer, clearly ought not to be in that list, for they do not hold the divisive critical theory. Certainly thirty-four of these scholars do not believe in the supernatural in the Bible at all, and they are the great leaders of the school of higher criticism. For instance, Kuenen says that they "form a conception of Israel's religious development tctally different from that which, as any one may see, is set forth in the Old Testament, and sketch primitive Christianity in lines which even the acutest reader cannot recognize in the New."\* Again he states: "So long as we derive a separate part of Israel's religious life directly from God, and allow the supernatural or immediate revelation to intervene in even one single point, so long also our view of the whole continues to be incorrect, and we see ourselves necessitated to do violence to the well-authenticated contents of the historical documents. It is the supposition of a natural development alone which accounts for all the phenomena."†

The presence of the supernatural in the Bible, in the form of miracles and predictive prophecy, is to these scholars *prima facie* evidence of the untrustworthiness of the narratives in which they occur. They do not hesitate to say that, when Jesus claimed to be the Messiah, in whom the Old Testament writings and prophecies are fulfilled, He made a mistake. A sound exegesis, say these critics, of which Jesus was ignorant,

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\* Modern Review, 1880, p. 463.

† Prophets and Prophecy, p. 585.



shows that there are no such prophecies in the Old Testament. G. C. Workman declares that there is no specific prophecy of Christ in the Old Testament. Five of the 147 names are Unitarians, 17 are Jews, and nearly all the others do not hold to the inspiration of the Scripture as taught in our Standards, while a number of them do not believe in any inspiration at all. Dr. Driver defines inspiration to be nothing more than "spiritual insight."

Even such a moderate man as Dillmann does not believe in the historic truth of Genesis. In the 5th Edition of his Commentary on Genesis, p. 215, he says, on the history of Abraham, that "it is now well understood that these narratives concerning the Patriarchs do not belong to the realm of exact history, but to that of legend." On the same page, and the following, he quotes Popper as saying that, "The stories of the Patriarchs are derived from Nature Myths;" Noeldeke and Stade: "The Patriarchs were never in Canaan;" and Hitzig: "that these narratives are altogether fabulous."

He explains the destruction of Korah, Dathan and Abiram, as narrated in Numbers 16, by saying that Moses threw them alive into a hole which he had made in his tent, and destroyed about 200 of the rebellious by fire.

If these scholars, then, are any authority on the interpretation of Scripture, we must go very much further than Dr. Briggs would have us go; for if their opinions are of any weight, we shall really have no Bible left. They are wise above all that is written, and the witticism of Sydney Smith aptly fits them all: "*Their forte is science, and their foible omniscience.*" All the leaders of this criticism in Europe acknowledge fully that their criticism is the diametrical opposite of the unanimous teaching of the New Testament. If a Protestant professor in Continental Europe who teaches this theory should assert that his teaching about the Pentateuch is agreeable to the teaching of the New Testament, he would be laughed out of his chair. In regard to all these critical scholars, we may well heed the warning of Paul: "O Timothy, keep that which is committed to thy trust, avoiding profane and vain babblings, and oppositions of science falsely so-

called: which some, professing, have erred concerning the faith."\*

The questions involved here cannot be decided by the conclusions reached by these biblical scholars whom Dr. Briggs has cited as witnesses, but must be determined by the Presbyterian view of the Scripture as set forth in our standards.

It would be amply sufficient to offset this list of names simply by the authority of Christ and the writers of the New Testament. But then it is well to remember that there are many eminent biblical scholars who utterly reject this critical theory as unsafe and unsound, and not warranted by facts.

The list given here is only partial, and might be greatly increased.†

\* 1 Tim. vi. 20, 21.

† Prof. A. H. Sayce, Oxford.

Principal Geo. C. M. Douglass, Glasgow.

Principal Alfred Cave, Hackney College.

Prof. James Robertson (*The Early Religion of Israel*, 1892).

Prof. C. H. H. Wright (Introd. to the O. T., 1890).

Prof. John Kennedy (*A Popular Argument for the Unity of Israel*, 1891).

Prof. John Forbes (*The Servant of the Lord in Israel*, xl.-lxvi., 1890).

Rector F. Watson (*The Law and the Prophets—Hulsean Lecture for 1882*).

Prof. Stanley Leathes (*The Law in the Prophets*, 1891).

Very Rev. R. Payne-Smith (*The Mosaic Authorship and Credibility of the Pentateuch*, 1869).

James Sime, F. R. S. E. (*The Kingdom of all Israel*, 1883).

Prof. Robert Watts (*The Newer Criticism*, etc., 1882).

Principal Rainy (*The Bible and Criticism*, 1878).

Bishop A. C. Hervey (*The Books of Chronicles in Relation to the Pentateuch*, etc., 1892).

Bishop C. J. Ellicott (*Christus Comprobator*, 1892).

Rev. Henry Hayman, D. D. ("Prophetic Testimony to the Pentateuch:" *Bib. Sac.*, 1892).

Pastor Fr. Roos (*Die geschichlichkeit des Pentateuchs*, 1883).

Adolf Zahn (*Das Deuteronomium*, 1890).

Eduard Böhl (*Zum Gesetz und zum Zeugnis*, 1883).

Pastor G. Schumann (*Die Wellhausenche Pentateuchtheorie*, 1892).

Bredenkamp (*Gesetz und Propheten*, 1881).

R. S. Poole ("Date of the Pentateuch—Theory and Facts," *Cont. Review*, 1887).

Conder ("Ancient Men and Modern Critics," *Cont. Review*, 1887).

Edersheim (*Prophecy and History in Relation to the Messiah*, Warburton Lectures, 1880-84).

Waller ("Is Genesis a Compilation?" *Theological Monthly*, 1891).

Pastor Naumann (*Das Erste Buch der Bibel*, 1890).

Prof. William H. Green (*Moses and the Pentateuch Vindicated*).

Prof. E. Cone Bissell (*The Pentateuch*).

Vos (*Mosaic Origin of the Pentateuch Codes*, 1886).

Stebbins (*A Study of the Pentateuch*, 1881).

S. C. Bartlett (*Sources of History in the Pentateuch*, Stone Lecture, 1882).

Rabbi I. M. Wire (*Pronaos to Holy Writ*, 1891).

Prof. C. M. Mead (*Romans Dissected*, 1891).

Lias ("Wellhausen on the Pentateuch," in the *Theological Review*, 1890).



In addition to these there are worthy of mention such American scholars as Drs. W. J. Beecher, John S. Davis, C. M. Hemphill, C. M. Mead, W. W. Moore, W. H. Jeffers, W. M. McPheters, Stephen Yerkes, T. N. Chambers, Howard Osgood, Ira M. Price and John Dewitt, all of whom are as sound in the faith as they are eminent in scholarship.

It is a well-known fact that some of the ablest German scholars are treating the higher criticism with unsparing ridicule, and speak of its conclusions as absurd, ridiculous and impossible. The pastors of Germany, in view of the deadening influence this criticism has on the spiritual life of the people, are almost solidly arrayed against it, and do no longer read the books of these professors.

Indeed, it is an open secret, that, in Germany, the higher criticism, so far as the Old Testament is concerned, is now a dead issue. It is entirely unproductive. The rationalistic critics there are now centering their destructive methods on the New Testament.

There is a very large number of scholars in the departments of ethnology, comparative religion, archæology and exploration in Bible lands, men of broad minds and extensive learning, who repudiate the destructive results of the higher criticism, and declare that the ascertained facts in their various fields of labor bear favorable testimony to the credibility of Old Testament history, and especially that of the Pentateuch.\*

In truth, the theory of the higher criticism is wholly inadequate to arrive at just and fair conclusions in reference to the Holy Scriptures. It is unscientific in that it ignores some of the most important facts involved, especially the personal presence of Almighty God with the Hebrews, as their Guide, Lawgiver, Counselor and Friend, the one stupendous fact, which stands out conspicuously above all other facts, and exerted an influence so potent, not only on the people of Israel, but on the entire world, that it has not yet spent its force. An abundance of credible evidence proves this personal presence, so that to

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\* Pentateuchal Criticisms, pp. 368-398.

set it aside in the investigation of the documents which were produced under the influence and inspiration of that Gracious Presence is unpardonable. But the higher criticism asserts dogmatically that the Bible must be investigated like any human production. In a modified sense that may be granted. Yet, since we have shown that the Scripture is the product of the double authorship of God and man, in which, however, the Divine is everywhere predominant and supreme, the entire ignoring of the divine element in the study of the Book is something worse than a blunder. Dr. Howard Osgood has well said: "If the higher criticism, as now defined by a living writer, means criticism only of the human side of the Bible, its incompetency and incompleteness are self-confessed, unless the Bible is only a human book. It would decide fundamental points, and, in the hands of its chief disciples, claims to decide fundamental points, by considering only the human side of the Bible." \* Once admit the Divine element and the Divine Presence to their proper place in the theory of investigation, and difficulties will either disappear or be vastly minimized, and the Pentateuch will be seen to be a harmonious unit, consistent with itself and with the entire Scripture.

2. By the same divisive method the higher critics have, in their judgment, reached the certain conclusion *that the book of Isaiah* is made up of a heterogeneous medley of the productions of various authors, most of which have, by some clever scribe, been arbitrarily assigned to our prophet.

Eichhorn carried the separatist theory so far that he divided the prophecy into eighty-five distinct oracles, which he attributed to many different authors and times. Ewald, whose analysis Dr. Cheyne judges not to be excessive, traced the hands of at least seven authors in the book of Isaiah, and called the principal author of the last part the "*Great Unknown*." He denied to Isaiah the last 27 chapters, chapter xiii. to xiv. 13, the first part of chapter xxi., and chapters xxxiv. to xxxix., thus crediting him with less than half of the contents of the

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\* Bibliotheca Sacra, 1892, p. 541.



book which bears his name. Presumably, this is the view of Dr. Briggs, since he affirms that Isaiah is not the author of half of this prophecy. Some of the higher critics, however, assign the historical chapters, 36 to 39, to Isaiah, although the tendency among them is to take more, rather than less, from him.

The critics reach this conclusion concerning Isaiah principally by means of three independent lines of argument, based respectively; *first*, on differences of style, expression and construction; *second*, on differences of subject-matter, especially differences and originality of theological ideas; and *third*, on what may be called the historical situation, according to which it is assumed that a prophet must speak from his own historical environment to his contemporaries, and that, strictly speaking, he cannot predict historical events of the distant future, nor found a promise on events which are to occur at some future time.

It should be stated here that this criticism is a purely negative one, based entirely on considerations which are subjective to the critics, on their mere impressions, wholly unsupported, as we shall see, by historical evidence of any kind. Yet the critics accuse all those who differ from them, in this view of Isaiah, of narrowness, of theological prejudice, and of a want of conscience. Dr. Cheyne charges the orthodox with perverseness of heart in resisting the conclusions of this criticism, and yet states it as a fact to be regretted, that "we are left wholly to conjecture in determining Isaiah's literary work." \* But may not the orthodox be excused for refusing to abandon a view of Scripture, which has been sacredly held by many generations of God's people, for a mere conjecture; and further, express *their* regret that those who have obtained commanding positions in the Church as teachers, should not only receive, but insist on teaching, conjectures in place of the truth?

Nothing need be said here in regard to the first two lines of

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\* Article *Isaiah*, Encyclopedia Britannica.

argument, which have reference to style and theological ideas respectively. It is admitted by the critics that the entire book is pervaded by the characteristics, the thoughts, the aim and spirit of Isaiah. They say that the disputed parts were written by his disciples who were imbued with his spirit, and having his writings before them, tried to imitate his style, and used his words, his forms of expression and modes of thought. After such an admission, it cannot be so very difficult to concede that, so far as style and contents are concerned, Isaiah himself wrote it.

The one argument, which is absolutely conclusive with the higher critics, rests on the pre-supposition that the prophet has his vision limited by the contemporaneous circumstances of his own times; that he cannot transport himself to occupy a future point of view, and from it narrate events which have no immediate connection with his own historical situation.

Accordingly, Isaiah could not have written, for instance, the last twenty-seven chapters of his book, since the writers of them, seemingly, occupied a position one hundred and seventy years in advance of our prophet at Babylon, when Israel was in captivity, and relates events which grew out of those historical environments.

Says one of these critics: "If, *in any other book*, you saw the name of Cyrus, you would say at once that the book was not written before the time of Cyrus. Then you must, *in consistency*, say so here."\* And this reveals precisely what the critics mean when they insist that in our investigations of the Bible, we must treat it exactly as we would any other book. We must exclude the divine element from the process and handle it merely as the production of fallible men. "A prophetic book must, *in consistency*, be treated as if it were not prophetic"; and it must not be conceded that a holy prophet of God can obtain knowledge of future events in any other way than through natural channels.

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\* Introduction to the Bible Commentary on Isaiah, p. 11.



Knobel says in reference to the possibility of the 53d chapter of Isaiah being a prophecy of Christ: "How could it, since the writer lived five hundred years before Christ?"\*

Dr. Delitzsch has well observed: "Modern criticism finds itself hampered between two prejudices: there is no real prophecy; there is no real miracle. This criticism calls itself free, but upon closer examination it is found in a dilemma. In this dilemma it has two magic words with which it fortifies itself against every impression of historical evidence. As it transforms the histories of miracles into traditions and myths so it either transforms the prophecies into predictions after the event, or brings the predicted events into such close connection with the prophet, that to foresee them did not require inspiration but only combination."†

The more evangelical wing of the critics would still credit the prophet with a certain kind of inspiration, which is, after all, no real inspiration, but only a quickening of the prophet's mind or consciousness, which enabled him clearly to see the drift of things, and so point to a combination of events as about to happen. In this he was likely to be correct, since it was only the logical outcome of what was occurring about him; but, being human, he might also be mistaken.

Dr. Driver in his last book, which Dr. Briggs has edited in this country under his own name, affirms, without qualification, that "pre-exilic prophecies are uniformly accommodated to the occasion out of which they arise." "To base a promise upon a condition of things *not yet existent*, and without any point of contact with the circumstances or situation of those to whom it is addressed, is alien to the genius of prophecy."‡

The possibility, therefore, of predicting future events, which are not immediately connected with the prophet's own historical situation, must be rigidly excluded on the *a priori* assumption that it is unscientific and contrary to sound principles of

\* Introduction to Isaiah, Bible Commentary, p. 10.

† Introduction to Dr. Delitzsch's Commentary on Isaiah.

‡ Introduction to Literature of the O. T., pp. 200, 210.

psychology. On this ground it is denied that Isaiah is the author of more than half the book which bears his name.

I cannot do more here than call attention to the far-reaching consequences of this dictum of the higher critics on the trustworthiness of the Bible as the Word of God. The Christian religion rests largely on the historic facts of prophecy. The birth, the death and resurrection of Christ were subjects of predictive prophecy, and this theory will inevitably involve in doubt these great truths of our faith. But the hypothesis is unfounded and cannot be admitted. The inter-relations which we find between the different parts of the Old Testament, but more especially between the two Testaments, are beyond the power of any good man to construct from the drift of his own environment, however much his mind may have been quickened by the Divine Spirit. They were distinctly revealed to the prophet by the Lord.

Reference has already been made to this matter under the charge on prophecy. We would here only call attention to the fact that the book of Isaiah itself furnishes an instance of predictive prophecy which overthrows the hypothesis. In chapters eight and ten, which are both conceded to be Isaiah's, it is definitely predicted that Assyria, after devastating Samaria, would bring Judah also to the brink of a similar peril, but would then be hurled back and be itself overthrown.

This prophecy could not have grown out of the historical situation of the times. It was given during the early years of Ahab's reign, when Assyria was not only a friendly power, but was Judah's ally. Thirty years after it had its exact fulfilment in the Assyrian invasion, and King Hezekiah was strengthened by it courageously to hold out to the last against the attack and demand of the Assyrian monarch. The *a priori* assumption of the critics utterly breaks to pieces on a substantial fact like that.

Both the authenticity and genuineness of the entire book of Isaiah have been demonstrated by authors whose scholarship will not be disputed by even the highest of the higher critics.\*

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\* Alexander on Isaiah. The Servant of the Lord, by Rev. Joseph Forbes, D.D. An Introduction to the Old Testament, Rev. Ch. H. Wright, D.D. Rev. George Rawlinson, in Pulpit Commentary. Dr. W. Kay, Introduction to Bible Commentary.



The book itself gives evidence of its essential unity on the basis of the thoughts and forms of expression found in the Pentateuch. The second part, rising far above the first in conception, is the necessary complement of it, and the four historical chapters, thirty-six to thirty-nine, form the chain which firmly unites the two.

Since the captivity had been foretold, a prophecy predicting the restoration was also needed to comfort God's people in the trials of discipline, to wean them from idolatry to a spiritual service of God, to give them true views of the divine omniscience and omnipotence, and in due time to be the means of inducing Cyrus to issue the edict of the return. And the fact that it influenced Cyrus to order the return of the Jews argues strongly in favor of the Isaianic character of the prophet.

As the writer of the disputed parts moves in the circle of Palestinian thoughts, customs and images, and amidst the hills, valleys, towns, and by the seaside of Palestine, and gives a description of the condition of the Jewish people which could never have been true of them during any time of the exile, he could not have been a prophet of the exile. The Jews also were accustomed to use great care in preserving the names of their prophets and public men. The names of prophets who wrote only a chapter or two have been carefully transmitted to us. In view of this fact it is certainly inconceivable that the noblest body of prophecy in Scripture, dealing in the grandest truths, and inspiring the sublimest hopes, was written by a prophet, or a number of prophets, whose names were allowed to drop into utter oblivion by these very Jews to whom it proved to be such an unfailing source of help and comfort.

The external historical evidences strongly support the genuineness and authenticity of the prophecy. For about 2,500 years, Isaiah has been held to be the author of the entire book which bears his name, with a single dissenting voice in the 12th Century. The Septuagint, at about 300 B. C., assigned the whole book to him. That points back to the decision of the great Synagogue, and makes it morally certain that those astute Jewish scholars, Ezra and Nehemiah, whose judgment

in this matter must certainly be regarded as in the highest degree trustworthy, held the same view.

No Jew before Christ, or for many centuries after him, ever expressed a doubt in respect to the authorship of Isaiah. Jeremiah, Ezekiel, Nahum, and Zephaniah quote from the disputed chapters, and to affirm, as some of the higher critics do that Isaiah quoted from them, only makes manifest the desperate straits in which they find themselves to maintain their conjectures.

Christ and the Apostles evidently coincided with the opinion, then current, that the entire book was the product of Isaiah, and this should have great weight with all Christian people.

Enough has now been said to show that the conclusions reached by the higher criticism on the authorship of Isaiah are not trustworthy, being contradicted by the contents of the book itself, and by the entire body of historical evidence. Isaiah is one of those holy prophets mentioned in Hebrews who had been sawn asunder by men, who, owing to an erroneous *a priori* assumption, are unable to understand his great prophecy.

It only remains now to call special attention to the testimony of Christ and the writers of the New Testament on both points of this question, and put on it the emphasis which it deserves. The issue is presented and must be met.

The higher critics quite generally object to this appeal to Christ and the Apostles on the ground that their opinion cannot be allowed to have any weight on the question of a scientific criticism of the Holy Scriptures. But since they spake with final authority by the Spirit on all questions of faith, this cannot be regarded as sound reasoning.

Kuenen says: "The exegesis of the writers of the New Testament cannot stand before the tribunal of science. We must either cast aside as worthless our dearly bought scientific method, or must forever cease to acknowledge the authority of the New Testament in the domain of the exegesis of the Old. Without hesitation, we chose the latter alternative."\*

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\* Prophets and Prophecy in Israel, p. 487.



Again he says: "It is the common conviction of all the writers of the New Testament, that the Old Testament is inspired of God, and is thus invested with divine authority. The remark, made as it were in passing, in a passage of the fourth Gospel, that 'the Scripture cannot be broken,' is assented to by all the writers without distinction. In accordance with this they ascribe divine foreknowledge to the Israelitish prophets. And far indeed from limiting this foreknowledge to generalities, and thus depriving it of all its importance, they refer us repeatedly to the agreement between specific prophetic utterances and single historical facts, and have no hesitation in declaring their conviction, both that the prophet spoke of these specific facts, and that they, under God's direction, occurred in order that the word of the prophet might be fulfilled." It is unnecessary to support these statements by quoting passages; such passages are, as every one knows, very numerous.

Here, then, is, at the very beginning, a first objection which the New Testament places in our way. Its judgment concerning the origin and nature of the prophetic expectations, and concerning their relation to the historical reality, may be regarded as *diametrically opposed* to ours.\*

Herman L. Strack, one of the more moderate disciples of the higher criticism, states: "As regards passages from the New Testament, we must protest against their use for the twofold reason, that if they prove the Mosaic authorship, all other proofs are superfluous, and are a derogation from the authority of our Lord, and that the use of such proofs removes the whole question from the historical and critical domain."†

We admit it as true that, if the testimony of a half a dozen first-class witnesses be admitted, all the fine work of expert detectives will be entirely superfluous. Dr. Sanday, one of the latest converts to the higher critical school, and one of the

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\* Kuenen, *Prophets and Prophecy in Israel*, pp. 448, ff.

† Schaff-Herzog Encyclopedia: *Pentateuch*.

most evangelical in spirit, expresses his regret that an appeal has been made to Christ at this stage of the controversy. He thinks it ought to have been delayed until the critics could have finished their investigations. Yet he admits that, since the authority of Christ is at stake, the appeal to Him is in order, and must be candidly met.\* We should say so. Is there any evidence in regard to any point of our faith which is more reliable than positive statements of the Bible itself? Do modern critics have a more correct understanding of the Scriptures than Christ and the Apostles? May not Christians always make this final appeal to Christ in respect to any theological and biblical question on which He has spoken?

Since Christ is responsible for the whole New Testament, we will confine our consideration largely to His views on the question. Attention has already been called to the fact that Christ referred to the laws, the book and the productions of Moses in which he wrote of Him. He uses the name of Moses some eighteen times; and most of those references are personal and not merely to a book by that name. He and the writers of the New Testament also quote from all parts of the book of Isaiah, and assign those from the disputed sections to that prophet, equally with those from the confessedly Isaianic parts.† And these citations also, again, were not from a book so much as from the personal prophet. Jesus said, in respect to a portion of Isaiah which some of the critics deny to him, "These things said Isaiah, when he saw His glory, and spake of Him." ‡

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\* Oracles of God, Chapter 8.

† Compare Matt. 3: 3, Luke 3: 4, John 1: 23, with Isa. 40: 3; Matt. 4: 14, with Isa. 9: 1; Matt. 8: 17, with Isa. 53: 4; Matt. 12: 17-21, with Isa. 42: 1-4; Matt. 13: 14, 15, John 12: 39, Acts 28: 25, 27, with Isa. 6: 9, 10; Matt. 15: 7, 8, Mark 7: 6, 7, with Isa. 29: 13; Luke 4: 17, 18, with Isa. 61: 1-3; John 12: 38, Rom. 10: 16, with Isa. 53: 1; Acts 8: 28-33, with Isa. 1: 1, and 53: 7, 8; Rom. 9: 27, with Isa. 10: 20-23; Rom. 10: 20, with Isa. 65: 1; Rom. 15: 12, with Isa. 11: 1, 10.

‡ John 12: 41.



It has occurred to the critics that it is incumbent upon them to show why, apparently at least, they know more about the Word of God than did Christ. They assign two reasons:

*First*, that He accommodated His way of speaking to the current belief of the times. He knew that Moses was not the author of the Pentateuch, and that Isaiah wrote less than half the book which bears his name; when He called them the authors of those compositions respectively, He merely repeated the false opinions which had currency among the people.

On this point Dr. Briggs says: "The question is, shall we interpret the words of Jesus by the opinions of His contemporaries? This we deny. Jesus was not obliged to correct all the errors of His contemporaries."\*

But this is scarcely credible. It is contrary to the character of Christ. It was his habit to correct error wherever he met it, no matter what odium it might bring on Him. Thus He corrected the erroneous views of the Jews on the law of the Sabbath † and on the question of marriage and divorce. ‡

Dr. Manly has well said that at the time of Christ the Jews held the Old Testament to be "the Word of God, not only *their* God, but the God of all the earth, the only living and true God. This universal belief of the Jewish people in these writings could not be overlooked by one who came, like our Saviour, as a teacher, and the great teacher sent from God. It was necessary for Him either to contradict that belief if not true, or to sanction it if true. Upon such a question He could not be neutral. The Gospel, the final embodiment of divine truth, to be presented to the world by Jesus, the only begotten Son of God himself, could not be planted in the midst of unrebuked error; least of all could it be built upon error as its basis. And that the New Testament Gospel is built upon the Old, and assumes it throughout as its basis, its forerunner,

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\* The Bible, the Church, and the Reason, p. 130.

† Mark ii. 27, 28.

‡ Matt. xix. 3-6; Mark x. 6, 7.

its original and foundation, is unquestioned and unquestionable." \*

And then also, upon the supposition mentioned, there would have been no need for Christ to make the same assumption in the presence of Satan. He resisted each one of the temptations by a quotation from the Pentateuch, giving them as God's words. Satan at least was not troubled with bibliolatry. And since he was quite active as far back as in the time of Moses, and must have known of the alleged fraud, he might have retorted on Christ that those texts were not the Word of Jehovah, but were merely put in His mouth for histrionic purposes. But Satan felt those words to be the very words of the Spirit of truth. Christ is also to be credited with foreknowledge, and He must have foreseen that by means of such false opinions, his Church, some time or other, would be greatly disturbed, and could not, therefore, have allowed such a falsehood to pass unchallenged. He had all the courage needed for the vindication of the truth.

The right view of this matter is, that Christ accepted the opinions of the Jews of His day in reference to the Pentateuch for the reason that He knew them to be true, and that He intended to endorse them and thus settle for His disciples the authorship of the Pentateuch finally and forever. And in view of the destructive conclusions reached by the higher critics, it is high time that the Church should insist on recognizing the supreme authority of the teaching of Christ in this matter.

Nor does this interfere with the most thorough investigation of the Old Testament. It still remains for the Christian scholar by the most searching criticism to determine the relation of the Pentateuchal codes to one another; the extent to which editorial supervision and glosses appear; how far the biblical writers availed themselves of previously existing documents, and whether it is possible for us to trace them by any fair tests; the basis on which a true biblical chronology should

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\* The Bible Doctrine of Inspiration, by Dr. Basil Manly, p. 115.



be constructed, and many other similar questions pertaining to the condition and arrangement of the biblical books.

*Secondly*, that, owing to the limitations under which He was placed by the Incarnation, he was actually ignorant of the facts in the case. Dr. Driver leans to the theory of accommodation, but asks the question whether Christ is to be credited with knowledge of this kind.\* Prof. W. R. Harper says: "If there is an analysis, and Moses did not write the Pentateuch, the New Testament authorities, among others Jesus Himself, who seem to say that Moses wrote the Pentateuch, or, at any rate, to imply this, either must have been ignorant of the facts in the case, or, knowing them, must have (1) consciously taught falsely, or (2) accommodated themselves to the literary suppositions of their day. Each of these possibilities is attended with difficulties."† Dr. Sanday shrinks in horror from the idea that Christ could have accommodated Himself to current opinions when He knew them to be false, and prefers to think that, owing to the limitations put on Him by His humanity, *He did not know*.‡ This is manifestly, also, the view of Dr. Briggs; for he states: "Those who understand the doctrine of the humiliation of Christ find no more difficulty in supposing that Jesus did not know the author of the Pentateuch than that He did not know the day of His own advent."§ He made a mistake when He credited Moses with being the author of the Pentateuch, and Isaiah of the entire book which bears his name. He never had the advantage of being trained in the intricacies of a conjectural biblical criticism. He did not know the Scriptures. The critical research of this nineteenth century only has made known the literary nature and texture of the Scriptures, and Christ as a man could not know them in His day. And it is intimated that unless we accede to that position we deny the full reality of our Lord's humanity.

But that does not follow. Christ was perfectly *sinless*. He

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\* Preface to Introduction to Old Testament Literature, pp. 14, 15.

† Hebraica, Oct., 1888, p. 70.

‡ The Oracles of God, Chapter 8.

§ The Bible, the Church and the Reason, p. 129.

received at His baptism the Holy Spirit in all His fullness, and in Him both the human and Divine natures co-existed; and it is impossible for us to say how much He, as man, might know under those conditions. As the God-man He did exercise superhuman powers, as when He walked on the sea, miraculously increased a few loaves of bread and two small fishes, knew of the piece of money which was in the mouth of a fish and sent Peter for it, and had a perfect knowledge of what was in man before any thoughts were uttered. Since these things were true of Him, it cannot amount to a denial of His real humanity when we credit Him with a full knowledge of all questions pertaining to the Scriptures. The Gospels give us good reasons for believing that the human soul of Christ had such a present illumination that His knowledge was universal.

But did not He state that He was ignorant of the time when a certain day should come, which was known to none but the Father? And if his knowledge was limited in that particular, why may we not also suppose that He was likewise ignorant of matters pertaining to the Old Testament history? But it should be observed that conscious ignorance of a certain event is an entirely different thing from being *in error* on other matters. And then the contrary inference, rather, is to be made from his admission of ignorance on that one point, if that is really what He meant to say. He had made the impression on His disciples that He possessed all knowledge. He claimed no less than that. And it was reasonable for them to think that He knew the exact time of that portentous day of which He had been speaking to them. But He did not wish to leave a false impression on their minds. He was the Teacher of truth, and, therefore, when a false inference was made from His remarks, He was compelled to say that they must not mistake His meaning, as the time of that day's coming was unknown to Him.

But in His repeated references to the writings of Moses and Isaiah He made no such disclaimer, in respect to the limitation of His knowledge, but left the impression that He had an accurate acquaintance with those writings.



He made it very clear, not only that He had a most minute and particular knowledge of all the events embedded in the Old Testament, and was perfectly familiar with the very spirit which actuated such men as Abraham, Noah, Moses, David, and Isaiah—He was Himself the subject of the Old Testament theophanies; commissioned the prophets to teach His truth in preparation for His coming and the confirmation of the Gospel. They all taught and wrote by His spirit, and it was a part of His mission to this world to fulfil every jot and tittle of all that was written in both the law and the prophets. It is impossible to believe that He did not know the time and the manner of producing the Old Testament books, all of which are so vitally connected with His mission.

This involves not only the ignorance, but the moral nature of Christ as well. And as Oxford professors have been referred to in this case, I will also quote on this point from a late high Oxford authority:

“But it is not on this account alone that our Lord’s Human ignorance of the day of judgment, if admitted, cannot be made the premise of an argument intended to destroy His authority, when He sanctions the Mosaic authorship and historical trustworthiness of the Pentateuch. That argument involves a confusion between limitation of knowledge and liability to error; whereas, plainly enough, a limitation of knowledge is one thing, and fallibility is another. St. Paul says that ‘we know in part,’ and that ‘we see through a glass darkly.’ Yet St. Paul is so certain of the truth of what he teaches, as to exclaim, ‘If we, or an angel from heaven preach any other Gospel to you than that which we have preached unto you, let him be accursed.’ St. Paul clearly believed in his own infallibility as a teacher of religious truth; and the Church of Christ has ever since regarded his Epistles as part of an infallible literature. But it is equally clear that St. Paul believed his knowledge of religious truth to be limited. Infallibility does not imply omniscience, any more than limited knowledge implies error. Infallibility may be conferred on a human teacher with very limited knowledge by a special endowment pre-

serving him from error. When we say that a teacher is infallible, we do not mean that his knowledge is encyclopædic, but merely that, when he does teach, he is incapable of propounding as truth that which, in point of fact, is not true.

“Now the argument in question assumes that Christ our Lord, when teaching religious truth, was not merely fallible, but actually in serious error. If indeed our Lord had believed Himself to be ignorant of the authorship or true character of the book of Deuteronomy, we may presume that He would not have fallen below the natural level of ordinary heathen honesty, by speaking with authority upon a subject with which He was consciously unacquainted. It is admitted that He spoke as believing Himself to be teaching truth. But was He, in point of fact, *not* teaching truth? Was that which He believed to be knowledge nothing better than a servile echo of contemporary ignorance? Was His knowledge really limited on a subject-matter, where He was Himself unsuspecting of the existence of a limitation? Was He then not merely deficient in information, but fallible; not merely fallible, but actually in error? and has it been reserved for the criticism of the nineteenth century to set Him right? It must be acknowledged that our Lord’s statement respecting the day of judgment will not avail to sustain a deduction which supposes, not an admitted limitation of knowledge, but an unsuspected self-deception of a character and extent which, in the case of a purely human teacher, would be altogether destructive of any serious claim to teach substantial truth.

“Nor is this all. The denial of our Lord’s infallibility in the form in which it has come before us of late years, involves an unfavorable judgment, not merely of His intellectual claims, but of the penetration and delicacy of His moral sense. This is the more observable because it is fatal to a distinction which has been projected between our Lord’s authority as a teacher of spiritual or moral truth, and His authority when dealing with those questions which enter into the province of historical criticism. If in the latter sphere He is said to have been liable and subject to error, in the former, we are sometimes told, His



instinct was invariably unerring. But is this the case if our Lord was really deceived in His estimate of the book of Deuteronomy, and if, further, the account of the origin and composition of that book which is put forward by His censors be accepted as satisfactory? Our Lord quotes Deuteronomy as a work of the highest authority on the subject of man's relations and duties to God. Yet we are assured that in point of fact this book was nothing better than a pious forgery of the age of Jeremiah, if indeed it was not a work of that prophet, in which he employed the name and authority of Moses as a restraint upon the increasing polytheism of the later years of King Josiah. That hypothesis has been discussed elsewhere, and by others, on its own critical merits. Here it may suffice to observe, that if it could have been seriously entertained, it would involve our Lord in something more than intellectual fallibility. If Deuteronomy is indeed a forgery, Jesus Christ was not merely ignorant of a fact of literary history. His moral perceptions were at fault. They were not sufficiently fine to miss the consistency, the ring of truth, in a document which professed to have come from the great Lawgiver with a Divine authority; while, according to modern writers, it was only the 'pious' fiction of a later age, and its falsehood had only not been admitted by its author, lest its effect should be counteracted. \* \* \* \*

“ Before us is no mere question as to whether Christ's knowledge was or was not limited; the question is, whether as a matter of fact He taught or implied the truth of that which is not true, and which a finer moral sense than His might have seen to be false. The question is plainly whether He was a trustworthy teacher of religious no less than of historical truth. The attempted distinction between a critical judgment of historical or philological facts, and a moral judgment of strictly spiritual or moral truths is inapplicable to a case in which the moral judgment is no less involved than the intellectual; and we have really to choose between the infallibility, moral no less than intellectual, of Jesus Christ our Lord on the one hand, and the conjectural speculations of critics, of whatever degree of critical eminence, on the other.

“Indeed, as bearing upon this vaunted distinction between spiritual truth, in which our Lord is still, it seems, to be an authority, and historical truth, in which His authority is to be set aside, we have words of His own which prove how truly He made the acceptance of the lower portions of His teaching a preliminary to belief in the higher. ‘If I have told you earthly things, and ye believe not, how shall ye believe if I tell you of heavenly things?’ How indeed? If, when He sets the seal of His authority upon the writings of Moses as a whole, and upon the most miraculous incidents which they relate in detail, He is really only the uneducated Jew who ignorantly repeats and reflects the prejudice of a barbarous age, how shall we be sure that when He reveals the Character of God, or the precepts of the new life, or the reality and nature of the endless world, He is really trustworthy—trustworthy as an Authority to whom we are prepared to cling in life and in death? You say that here your conscience ratifies His teaching,—that the ‘enthusiasm of humanity’ which is in you sets its seal upon this higher teaching of the Redeemer of men. Is, then, your conscience in very truth the ultimate and only teacher? Have you anticipated and might you dispense with the teaching of Christ? And what if your conscience, as is surely not impossible, has itself been warped or misled? What if, in surveying even the moral matter of His teaching, you still assume to exercise a ‘verifying faculty,’ and object to this precept as an ascetic, and to that command as exacting, and to yonder most merciful revelation of an endless woe as ‘Tartarology.’ Alas, brethren, experience proves it, the descent into the Avernus of unbelief is only too easy. \* \* \* \*

“The man who sincerely believes that Jesus Christ is God, will not doubt that His every word standeth sure, and that whatever has been sealed and sanctioned by His supreme authority is independent of, and unassailable by, the fallible judgment of His creatures concerning it.” \*

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\* Liddon : The Divinity of Our Lord, Lecture VIII., *passim*.



But we should not fail to notice here that it is admitted by all the radical critics, and also by some of the most evangelical of the school, that they do contradict Christ on an important point of biblical interpretation ; and, further, that they have the assurance of affirming themselves to be correct and Christ in error ; and, therefore, ask Christian people to abandon the teachings of Christ in this respect and accept theirs instead. Thus from the position of the errancy of the written Word we are led necessarily to that of the *errancy of the Incarnate Word*. This is the issue before us, and it is time that Christian people fully comprehended the meaning of it.

The Lord Jesus Christ is made known to us as the one in whom "dwelleth all the fullness of the Godhead bodily," "in whom are hid all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge ;" who is "the Light of the World," "the Truth" itself, by whom "came grace and truth" ; who tells the truth ; bears "witness to the truth" ; saves men "through the belief of the truth," and claims all those who believe the truth as His own children ; who is "the *faithful and true* Witness," whose word is yea and amen. Giving to the apostles the fullness of the Spirit of Truth, He commissioned them to build the Church's life and faith on Him as the Corner-Stone.

Now, if all these high claims made by the Scripture in behalf of Christ and his apostles must be taken with an allowance ; if they made false or erroneous statements in reference to the genuineness of other parts of Scripture, there is no certainty that they have not made similar false or erroneous statements in other directions, and that the arguments for the enforcement of faith and conduct which they have based on these statements may not be fallacious.

We have, then, no more foundation whereon to build our faith and life with joyous confidence, and it is simply preposterous to affirm that the Scripture, thus constructed, can be a creditable witness to its own statements, and a rule of faith and duty. If plain and direct statements of Scripture, made by Christ and the apostles themselves, may be regarded as not true, then must confidence in them as infallible teachers be lost, and the

Presbyterian position that the Spirit speaking in the Scripture is the Supreme Judge in all questions of religion, in whose sentence we are to rest, is effectually undermined and must be abandoned.

How the Scriptures, thus mutilated and without any objective authority, can be "the only infallible rule of faith and practice," as Dr. Briggs affirms, it is difficult, if not impossible, to comprehend. If such a Bible can be that to him, it can certainly not be an infallible rule to the Church and ministry in general; and it is safe to say that such a view of the Scriptures has never been thought possible under our terms of subscription.

It may seem an unfair, yes, almost an unrighteous thing, to charge a Christian minister with contradicting vital doctrine, merely because he denies that Moses wrote the Pentateuch, and that Isaiah did not write half the book which bears his name, but when the destructive results which are necessarily involved in those innocent-looking statements, are clearly seen, the matter assumes an altogether different aspect. The very quintessence of the evil lies in this matter.

The theory of the higher criticism puts the entire Bible under suspicion and distrust; it cuts up the historical fabric in which the revelations of God have been conveyed to mankind into small fragments, and throws them into unintelligible confusion; it makes the prophets of the Old Testament accessory to the palming off of a fabricated history on God's people; it makes inspiration in any true sense impossible; under the cover of an assumed admiration for the character of Christ, it puts discredit on His testimony and that of the New Testament writers in their estimate of the Old Testament; it destroys faith, and does not restore it; it breaks down man's confidence in the book of God, and does not build it up again; and it makes it impossible for any one to tell where and what the truth of God in Scripture is.

Surely there ought to be most potent reasons given before such a theory should find acceptance. But there are absolutely no historical facts which support it. All the facts on which the



theory rests, and by which its results are reached, are found in the text by the analysis of words and phrases, and are largely created by the theory itself. Most of these internal facts would have no existence at all but for this unverified and unverifiable theory. All *external historical facts*, the whole of an unbroken tradition, all the testimony of a long line of historical writers, most of the discoveries made in researches in Bible lands, as well as all reason and common sense, are against the conclusions of the higher critics. They assume conjectures to be facts in the first instance, and then make them the foundation of elaborate arguments, to which they give the high-sounding name, *scientific*.

The higher criticism takes all the meaning out of that magnificent chapter, which rightly stands at the head of our Confession of Faith, and which for its forceful and correct setting forth of the biblical doctrine respecting the Holy Scripture, has been the admiration of the Christian world. For if, in order rightly to understand the Scripture, we must first cut it to pieces, and make of it a patchwork of confused and miscellaneous fragments, and if we must regard a large part of its history, and many direct statements, not to speak of other matters, as not true in fact, then our confessional statements respecting the Scriptures become simply absurd. It could not be said that the God of truth is the Author of such a Bible; that for the better preserving and propagating the truth, "He committed" the same wholly unto writing; that He "immediately" inspired it in the Hebrew and Greek languages, so that the canonical books of the Old and New Testaments are the "Word of God" written, and thus constitute the Holy Scripture, the one book, which, by "*the consent of all the parts*," evidences its "incomparable excellencies," "entire perfection," "infallible truth," and "divine authority," which has expressly set down in it the whole counsel of God, concerning all things necessary for His own glory and man's salvation, faith and life, and made so clear that the unlearned may understand and believe it; furnishes its own infallible rule for the interpretation of Scripture by comparing one part with another; and is the Supreme Judge,

to which all questions of religion, faith, salvation and life, decrees of councils and doctrines of men and private spirits, are to be referred for that final decision, and in which we are to rest.\*

So entirely does our Confession regard the written Scripture as the truthful word of God in all its parts, that it affirms that, "By faith a Christian believeth *to be true* whatever is revealed in the word for the authority of God, Himself, speaking therein."† To accept as true, therefore, the conclusions of the higher criticism means revolution of our system of doctrine. It leaves us only a *spent Bible*. Is it possible that the truth at stake here is not to be considered essential? It is as essential to our system as the foundation is to a temple.

And it is for this reason that on three occasions the General Assembly has warned the churches to guard against this criticism, and enjoined the Presbyteries to see to it that candidates for the ministry be not subjected to its influence in our theological seminaries. Everywhere it has antagonized the evangelical spirit and exerted a baneful influence on the faith of God's people, and blasted as with mildew the religious life. It has proved to be the dry-rot in the German Church, reducing religion to a mere name. The only hope of that Church for better things is based on the belief that this criticism is dying, and that the evangelical spirit is reviving.

And now this higher criticism demands official recognition in the great Presbyterian Church in the United States. It seeks the cover of the old blue banner, which, in its long and glorious history, has ever floated only over God's inerrant Word, and the right of recognition in the chairs of our schools of sacred learning. And if it should gain these vantage grounds it will go on its work of instilling doubt, of troubling the Church, of undermining the pulpit, and of benumbing the evangelical life and spirit of the Church. It is a dangerous error and ought to be condemned by this court.

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\* Confession of Faith, Chapter i., Sections 1, 2, 5, 6, 7, 8, 10.

† Confession of Faith, Chapter xiv., Section 2.



*PROGRESSIVE SANCTIFICATION AFTER DEATH.*

In the sixth charge Dr. Briggs is accused of teaching that the sanctification of believers is not complete at death, but that, as the specification shows, it is continued in what he calls the middle state. He admits the fact indicated in the specification, but denies that this view is contrary either to the Scripture or the Standards. Since, both in the Inaugural Address and in the evidence submitted, he has interwoven this doctrine with his views on race redemption, which is not limited by election, and with those on the process of redemption after death, we will gain a clearer view of the doctrine, if we consider for a moment his opinions on these two important subjects. "The Bible," he informs us, "presents man in the midst of an original innocency and an ultimate perfection. *Sin is only a temporary condition.*" . . . . "The Bible tells us of a race origin, a race sin, a race ideal, a race redeemer, and a race redemption."\*

"It comprehends the whole nature of man, his whole life and the entire race."† The Bible knows of no limitations of this redemption by election.

Dr. Briggs cherishes large expectations in regard to the redeeming work to be done in the world beyond the grave, and "looks with hope and joy for the continuance of the processes of grace and the wonders of redemption in the company of the blessed."‡

It is for us so to broaden our view of the divine love that, "if life in this world is brief, and life in the middle state is long, we must rise to the conception of the love of God as accomplishing even greater works of redemption in the middle state than in this world."§

He labors with great earnestness, on *a priori* grounds, so to "construct the doctrine of the salvation of infants and the heathen in harmony with established doctrines," as will enable

\* Inaugural Address, p. 50.

† Inaugural Address, pp. 51, 55.

‡ Inaugural Address, pp. 54, 55.

§ Mag. of Christian Literature, Dec., 1889, p. 106.

him, in respect to these classes, to affirm that they are justified in the middle state, since they see Christ there for the first time, and could, therefore, not sooner exercise that faith in Him, by which alone sinners are justified, "not till then are they justified, for there can be no justification without faith for them any more than for others. The intermediate state is for them a state of blessed possibilities of redemption." \*

"He raises the question whether any man is irretrievably lost ere he commits this unpardonable sin, and whether those who do not commit it in this world ere they die are, by the mere crisis of death, brought into an unpardonable state; and whether, when Jesus said that this sin against the Holy Ghost was unpardonable here and also hereafter, He did not imply that all other sins might be pardoned hereafter as well as here." †

"We are opening our minds," he states, "to see that the Redeemer's work upon the cross was the beginning of a larger work in the realm of the dead, and from His heavenly throne whence the exalted Saviour is drawing all men unto Himself." ‡

Dr. Briggs cites, as "excellent thoughts," the following statement of Dr. Dorner, in reference to the unbelieving in the middle state :

"But in regard to those who died unbelieving, or not yet believing, to them also is the ground of their souls laid bare; hence also their impurity, their discord and alienation from God is unveiled. . . . If, instead of repenting and being converted, instead of growing in self-knowledge and knowledge of God as holy, and yet gracious in Christ, they prefer to continue in evil, then the form of their sin becomes more spiritual, more demoniacal, in accordance with their state from which this world recedes farther and farther, and thus it ripens for judgment." § He maintains that the "question we have to determine as Calvinists is whether divine grace is limited in its operation to this world of ours, whether the divine act of re-

\* Mag. of Christian Literature, Dec., 1889, pp. 110, 111.

† Mag. of Christian Literature, Dec., 1889, p. 113.

‡ Andover Reviews, Vol. 13, p. 59.

§ *Whither?* p. 211.



generation may take place in the middle state or not, whether any part of the order of salvation is carried on there, and, if any part, what part. These questions force themselves upon us in connection with our hopes for the salvation of infants and heathens." \*

He states indeed that "the Bible does not teach universal salvation, but it does teach the salvation of the world, of the race of man, and that cannot be accomplished by the selection of a limited number of individuals from the mass." †

Yet Dr. Briggs holds, that notwithstanding this redemption of the entire race, some are "unredeemed," and that for the reason that they are evidently beyond the reach of redemption by their own act of rejecting it, and of hardening themselves against it, and by *descending into such depths of demoniacal depravity in the middle state*, that they vanish from the sight of the redeemed as altogether and irredeemably evil, and never more disturb the harmonies of the saints." ‡

These dangerous utterances of Dr. Briggs set before us in clearer light the matter which is the subject of the sixth charge, namely: *Progressive Sanctification after death*.

From what has already been said, it is clear that Dr. Briggs does not mean, by progressive sanctification in the middle state, merely a progressive enlargement of the powers of our being, a growing knowledge of God and Christ, and a continual advancement toward a fullness of life in all its experiences. If that were his meaning, the Christian world would agree with him.

What he teaches is another thing altogether. Dr. Briggs affirms that the Christian, when he dies, goes into the middle state precisely the same person that he was here in the flesh, having the same evil habits and temper, and is defiled by sin in the higher nature, so that he is not prepared to meet God in judgment, and is unfit, owing to his sinful nature, for the life and fellowship of heaven. §

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\* *Whither?* p. 221.

† Inaugural Address, p. 55.

‡ Inaugural Address, pp. 55, 56.

§ Magazine of Christian Literature, pp. 112-114.

Sanctification has for its object the eradication of sin from the soul. When sin has been entirely removed, then the soul is completely holy, just as Jesus was holy even before He was born. A sinless being needs neither redemption nor sanctification. The advancement of a sinless being in holy life is not sanctification. In his Defense Dr. Briggs stated that not till the day of judgment are believers fully and forever freed from sin, and, further on, that they entered the middle state sinless. In whatever way it may be possible to reconcile these statements, there can be no doubt that both in the Inaugural and in his Defense before this court, Dr. Briggs maintains that sanctification in the middle state is necessary to complete the believer's redemption.\* They are there to repent of and mortify sin: His interpretation of the Standards involves that.

Progressive sanctification in the middle state is to subdue sin in, and eliminate it from, the higher nature of man. He affirms that, "The intermediate state is for all believers without exception, a state for their sanctification. They are there trained in the school of Christ, and are prepared for the Christian perfection which they must attain ere the judgment day." †

And it is to be distinctly noticed here, that no objection is raised against Dr. Briggs's doctrine of sanctification on the ground of its progressive character. We all hold that. The objection lies against the progression of it into what he calls the middle state.

Death does not end the conflict in his view. The weary struggle against inbred corruption, in which we come so often to sorrow, shame and remorse here, and of sinning and repenting, must continue through the long period of the middle state. Dr. Briggs does indeed assure us, that "they are delivered" there "from all temptations such as spring from without, from the world and the devil. They are encircled with influences for good, such as they never enjoyed before." ‡ And hence "we may justly hold that the evil that still lingers in the higher moral nature of believers will be suppressed and modi-

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\* Inaugural Address, p. 54.

† Magazine of Christian Literature, Dec., 1889, p. 112.

‡ Inaugural Address, p. 107.



fied with an energy of repentance, humiliation, confession and determination, that will be more powerful than ever before, because it will be stimulated by the presence of Christ and His saints." \*

But since life is long in the middle state, and brief in this world, the natural inference would seem to be that the process will be slower there than it usually is in this life. Many Christians become very Christlike even here.

Dr. Briggs illustrates his idea of sanctification in the next world, by a reference to Abraham. In this life, he affirms, the old patriarch lived on so low a stage of moral advancement, that, did he live now, we could not receive him into our families, and might be obliged to send him to prison lest he should defile the community by his example.†

But he states that "when he went into the abode of the dead, he held his pre-eminence among the departed. He made up for his defects in this life by advancing in the school of sanctification there open to him."‡

Where Dr. Briggs gathered all this information he has not told us. It is not the teaching of Scripture. The sterling piety and moral character of Abraham, *in his earthly life*, are commended in the Bible by Christ himself, for the imitation of God's faithful people.

The reason which Dr. Briggs gives for no longer entertaining the accepted doctrine, while helping us to a still clearer understanding of his position, at the same time shows how untenable it is. He calls the doctrine that the soul's final destiny is decided at death a "bugbear which makes death a terror to the best of men."§

Why should a believer stand in dread of a judgment at death since, as mantled in the perfect righteousness of Christ, there is no condemnation for him? He is reconciled, a child beloved of God in Christ, who delivers him from that fear of death through which unbelievers are subject to bondage all their life-

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\* Magazine of Christian Literature, Dec., 1889, p. 114.

† Inaugural Address, p. 56.

‡ Inaugural Address, p. 57.

§ Inaugural Address, p. 54.

time, since of God He is made to the Christian "wisdom and righteousness and sanctification and redemption."

And it is equally difficult to see why a believer should either shrink from or become inactive at the prospect of being immediately transformed into perfect holiness at death. Christian experience shows that such a prospect rather fills the believer's heart with the deepest joy, and inspires him to hasten his pace that he may the sooner reach that state of entire freedom from sin, singing as he journeys on:

"Why should I shrink at pain or woe,  
Or feel at death dismay?  
I've Canaan's goodly land in view,  
And realms of endless day.

"There happier bowers than Eden's bloom,  
*Nor sin nor sorrow know;*  
Blest seats! through rude and stormy scenes  
*I onward press to you."*

But says Dr. Briggs: "It is unpsychological and unethical to suppose that the character of the disembodied spirit will all be changed in the moment of death." \*

And this is probably the real ground of his objection to the received doctrine. The fact has already been referred to in this case, that Dr. Briggs, unconsciously to himself it may be, is under the influence of a philosophical principle of naturalism. It runs in a greater or less degree through all his writings, and here he yields to it so thoroughly that anything contrary to it must not even be supposed to be true. According to this psychological and ethical principle, the transformation of a saint of God in the dying hour to perfect holiness must be held to be a magical illusion. But the divine grace often works great transformations very suddenly which are not at all magical nor illusory.

For the conversion of the demoniac spoken of in the Gospel of St. Mark, and that of St. Paul, of Augustine, of John Bunyan, and of "the wickedest man in New York," involved changes which were as sudden and as great as the transformation by which the people of Christ pass, at death, from their sinful condition here to the perfect holiness of the better world. But such an assumed natural principle of psychology and ethics

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\* Inaugural Address, pp. 107, 108.



cannot be allowed to set at nought the plain teaching of God's holy Word.

The Scriptural argument in support of the doctrine assailed has already been placed before you. Let me state it here again as briefly as may be consistent with clearness.

Final destiny will be settled by the issues of this life. Every one shall "receive the things done in the body, according to that he hath done, whether it be good or bad." \* This statement of the Apostle Paul is abundantly confirmed and illustrated by the presentation which our Lord makes in the 25th of Matthew, of the grounds on which men are finally to be judged; † and by many other statements of Scripture. ‡ When therefore the earthly life ends, and the body is laid aside, the record on which final destiny will be decided is forever settled.

Man began to sin in the body. Christ became incarnate, had a body prepared for Him, in order that He, the second Adam, might undo, in His bodily life, all the evils which have been brought on mankind by the first Adam. These facts raise a strong presumption in favor of the belief that the whole work of Redemption will be complete for the people of Christ, when they quit their bodily existence.

And this presumption is greatly strengthened by the entire economy of grace under the Gospel. No hope of salvation is held out in the Word of God to those who put off faith and repentance to some future time. There is no intimation in Scripture that the Gospel-offer will be made to men in the life beyond the grave. They must be reconciled to God, through the mediation of Christ in this life, in order to be saved. "Now is the accepted time; behold now is the day of salvation." § "To-day, if ye will hear His voice, harden not your hearts." || There will be no escape for those who, in the present dispensation, neglect so great salvation as is offered in Christ. ¶

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\* 2 Cor. v. 10.

† Matt. xxv. 31-46.

‡ John iii. 36; v. 29; Luke xiii. 24-28; xvi. 26; Rom. ii. 6-11; 2 Thess. i. 7-10.

§ 2 Cor. vi. 2.

|| Heb. iv. 7.

¶ Heb. ii. 3.

The intense zeal of the apostles and early Christians in urging the Gospel on people for their salvation leaves no room for doubt that *they believed* the eternal welfare of man to be dependent on the reception of Christ here and now.\* Opportunity, in their view, ended with the present life. The Bible makes no mention whatever of an offer of the Gospel, of a process of redemption, in the world beyond the grave. Between Dives and Lazarus, between the wicked and the righteous, there is an impassable gulf fixed immediately after death. † “The wicked is driven away in his wickedness,” and so, supplying the ellipsis, has no hope in his death, “but the righteous hath hope in his death.” ‡ “When a wicked man dieth, his expectation shall perish; and the hope of unjust men perisheth.” § “It is appointed unto men once to die, but after this the judgment.” || Destiny is then irrevocably fixed, and process of Redemption is stayed.

When Jesus said to the Jews that, owing to their rejection of Him, they should die in their sins, ¶ He necessarily implied that His people would not die in their sins. They practically enjoy the full blessing of the great truth that “The Lamb of God taketh away the sin of the world.” \*\* He has borne their sins away. And the redeeming work of Christ is so absolutely perfect that no further satisfaction for sin need ever be made. On the ground of His sacrifice the Christian is here already completely justified, so that he need be in no terror of meeting God at any time in judgment, since it is not himself, but Christ, who answers for him. In his regeneration by the Spirit of God he has had planted in his higher nature the germ of a godly life, which puts that nature in direct opposition to sin, and which, through progressive sanctification in this life, acquires increasing intensity. The old man of corruption is put off. The new man is put on, “which after God is created in righteousness and true holiness.” †† “He is a new creature; old

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\* Acts xx. 26, 27.

§ Prov. xi. 7.

\*\* John i. 29.

† Luke xvi. 26.

|| Heb. ix. 27.

†† Eph. iv. 22, 24.

‡ Prov. xiv. 32.

¶ John viii. 24.



things are passed away; behold, all things are become new." \* The soul is vivified and sin is mortified. He now works out his salvation; "For it is God who works in him both to will and to do his good pleasure." † He has indeed been born of God; and, although sinning often through weakness, he has so in purpose renounced sin forever, that in truth "he cannot sin, because he is born of God." ‡

When, therefore, dissolution takes place between the soul and body in death, it involves, after all, not a very startling transformation for the Spirit to complete the work which He has already well begun and carried forward in the soul, and translate the saint then to be like Christ, perfect in holiness. It is not maintained that sin has its seat merely in the physical nature, and that therefore it is destroyed with the body at death, but that the Spirit of God then completely eliminates sin from the soul of the Christian, and sets his longing spirit free.

The great wonder in the work of redeeming man from sin, is his regeneration, his new birth from above; and whenever one has been thus born again by the Holy Spirit it involves a change no more marvelous for that soul to be at any time thereafter made perfect in holiness, than was seen in the man among the tombs, whom Christ made right instantly, both mentally and morally, or than occurred in Mary Magdalen, out of whom the Lord cast seven devils by the power of His word.

Furthermore, the Scripture teaches that sanctification is a work which the Holy Spirit carries on in the disciples of Christ through the ministration of God's word in this life. He does in the first instance beget them "with the word of truth," § as illustrated in the conversion of Lydia. || Then, "being born again, not of corruptible seed, but of incorruptible, by the word of God, which liveth and abideth forever," ¶ the Spirit conducts the work of sanctification by means of the purifying power of

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\* 2 Cor. v. 17.

† Phil. ii. 13.

‡ 1 John iii. 9.

§ James i. 18.

|| Acts xvi. 14.

¶ 1 Peter ii. 2.

the same word of God. They grow by the use of "the sincere milk of the word."\* Christ makes this prayer for His people: "Sanctify them through thy truth; thy word is truth."† In this way He sanctifies and cleanses His Church "with the washing of water *by the word*."‡ And still more explicitly we are told that "All Scripture . . . is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness: That the man of God *may be perfect*, thoroughly furnished unto all good works."§ And since the Scripture gives no intimation that the ministry of the word will continue in the next world, the work of sanctification is limited by it to this world.

But, again, we learn from Scripture that sanctification is a part of the redemption of Christ, of which His people are made partakers in this earthly life, and which results in them now in increasing holiness and good works. Jesus Christ is, in this life, made of God to His people, "wisdom and righteousness, and sanctification and redemption."|| "Being made free from sin, and become servants of God, they have their fruit unto holiness, and the end everlasting life."¶ Abiding in Christ, they "bring forth much fruit," and "are clean through the word which He hath spoken to them."\*\* "Christ gave Himself for us, that He might redeem us from all iniquity, and purify unto Himself a peculiar people, zealous of good works."†† "We are the workmanship of God, created in Christ Jesus unto good works, which God hath before ordained that we should walk in them."‡‡ Hence it is their daily duty now to cleanse themselves "from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit, *perfecting holiness* in the fear of God."§§ They are to "walk worthy of the Lord unto all pleasing, being fruitful in every good work, and increasing in

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\* 1 Pet. ii. 1.

|| 1 Cor. i. 30.

†† Titus ii. 14.

† John xvii. 7.

¶ Rom. vi. 22.

‡‡ Eph. ii. 10.

‡ Eph. v. 26.

\*\* John xv. 3, 5.

§§ 2 Cor. vii. 1.

§ 2 Tim. iii. 16, 17.



the knowledge of God.”\* And the Saviour makes this appeal to them: “Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father which is in heaven.”†

And that the sanctification by which Christians are to be prepared for the coming of the Lord is to take place in the bodily life on earth is still more evident from these words of Paul to the Thessalonians: “Abstain from all appearance of evil. And the very God of peace sanctify you wholly; and I pray God your whole spirit and soul and body be preserved blameless unto the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ.”‡ “And the Lord make you to increase and abound in love one toward another, and toward all men, even as we do toward you: to the end that He may stablish your hearts unblamable in holiness before God, even our Father, at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ with all His saints.”§ Here the apostle teaches that the sanctification of believers is to reach its completion at any moment in their lifetime when the Lord may suddenly come again. Their hearts are here to be established unblamable in holiness. And this is in thorough accord with the New Testament conception of the Christian life. According to this, believers are “led by the Spirit” ||—“walk in the Spirit” ¶—and, crucifying all evil affections, they become possessed of the fruit of the Spirit, which is “Love, joy, peace, long-suffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, temperance.”\*\* And for this reason they “are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a peculiar people; that they should show forth the praises of Him who hath called them out of darkness into His marvelous light.”††

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\* Phil. i. 10.

† Matt. v. 16.

‡ I Thess. v. 22, 23.

§ I Thess. iii. 12, 13.

|| Gal. v. 18.

¶ Gal. v. 16.

\*\* Gal. v. 22, 23.

†† I Pet. 2, 9.

Here, then, we see that, according to the Scripture, sanctification is a work which the Holy Spirit carries on in the souls of believers by means of the Word of God in this life, and reaches such blessed results by it as to fit them to meet their Lord at any time.

Keeping this truth in mind, we will be better able to understand what the Scripture says of the state of believers in the next world immediately after their death. It makes several statements which, in their combined testimony, conclusively show that the disciples of Christ enter the spirit-world free from sin and from all its effects.

1. *They go immediately to heaven.* The unclothing of believers in death is followed immediately by the being clothed upon with their house which is from heaven, that "building of God, not made with hands, eternal in the heavens." When passing through that change, they depart forever from the groaning to which we are subject in this life, owing to sin, trial and frailty, and enter at once upon that blessed state of being wherein mortality is swallowed up of life.\* And since sin is largely the cause of human mortality, when the mortal puts on immortality the last vestige of sin must be gone. Believers who have departed this life are *inheritors of the promises* in yonder world,† and since freedom from sin is one of the promises, they must have inherited it there.

The Apostle further states, that when believers go to be absent from the body, it is to be present with the Lord.‡ But Christ is in heaven, where nothing unclean shall enter.§ It cannot be, therefore, that His people should go to be present with Him there in a nature which is still defiled by sin. In that holy heaven believers shall be like Him, for they shall see Him as He is.|| The perfecting of that holiness, without which

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\* 2 Cor. 5, 1-4.

† Heb. 6, 12.

‡ 2 Cor. 5, 6-8.

§ Rev. 21, 27.

|| 1 John 3, 2.



no man shall see the Lord,\* takes place at death. Beyond that the process of redemption does not extend. When the saint departs from the body, and goes to be present with the Lord, he enters on the process of glorification.

2. *Quite in harmony with this, the souls of believers immediately after death are represented in Scripture as spotlessly pure.* Sin has been entirely suppressed, its defilement has been eliminated, and the work of sanctification has terminated in complete holiness. The great multitude who stand before the throne, and before the Lamb, are "*clothed with white robes.*" † It is conceded that the figurative representations of the Apocalypse are not to be unduly pressed in proof of doctrinal statements. But the imagery of the book of Revelation, no less than its positive declarations, gives us the truth of God for our learning; and, while some things are veiled in mystery, there are others whose meaning is too obvious to be misunderstood. And the figurative presentation, which we find in the fifth, sixth and seventh chapters of Revelation, of the condition of the souls of believers in their state between death and the general resurrection, accords precisely with the statements made in the fifth chapter of second Corinthians, which we have just been considering. They are there, in the sanctity of the heavenly home, clothed upon. Having departed from the body, they are there with Christ, whom only the holy shall see. All the members of that great multitude are victors, having palms in their hands, and singing hymns of praise to Almighty God and to the Lamb for His salvation, which has done its complete work in them.

It is conceded that the white robes are the symbol of righteousness. But this cannot be the imputed righteousness of Christ which only *covers* the sins of the believers, while in their case sin has been eradicated, the very thing which sanctification accomplishes. The white robes were once sin-stained, but the wearers of them have washed them, "and made them

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\* Heb. 12, 14.

† Rev. 7, 9.

white in the blood of the Lamb.”\* Christ’s robe of righteousness, which mantles the believer in justification, is not in need of being washed and made white. “The fine linen, *clean and white*,” in which believers are attired in the world beyond the grave, “*is the righteousness of the saints*,” attained by means of sanctification here. There they do no longer appear as defiled by sin, or as struggling with it. They give no sign of an “evil temper,” or of sin still remaining in the higher nature. The last vestige of sin has been washed out in the blood of the Lamb. They are there in that “glorious Church” which has been “sanctified, cleansed and presented to Christ, not having spot or wrinkle, or any such thing, but being holy and without blemish.”†

This is the “great gain,” “the crown of righteousness,” which Paul declared was ready for him at his exit from this life.‡

3. *Again, the souls of believers do at their death immediately enter on a state of unmingled blessedness.* We are assured by a voice from heaven, confirmed in a most solemn manner by the testimony of the Holy Spirit, that those who die in the Lord enter at once, after death, on a life of unalloyed bliss and of perfect rest. “Blessed are the dead which die in the Lord from henceforth : Yea, saith the Spirit, that they may rest from their labors; and their works do follow them.”§ There is no mystery about this. The meaning is perfectly clear; and the declaration comes to us with all the authority of an immediate oracle from heaven, and claims our unquestioning faith. And since the blessing of dying in the Lord is promised to every Christian, this statement of the Word of God is descriptive of the condition of all the people of Christ immediately after their death. They are completely blessed, and have entered upon the perfect rest of God. Their toil and conflict have been accomplished. They rest from their labors, not only from those

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\* Rev. 7 : 14.

† Eph. 5 : 27.

‡ 2 Tim. 4 : 8.

§ Rev. 14 : 13.



pertaining to the hard service of Christ against the opposition and persecution of an evil world, but also from the more severe and more weary struggle of eliminating sin from their natures by means of confession, humiliation, mortification and repentance.

And this also agrees with other statements of Holy Scripture. The Christian life in this world is represented everywhere on its pages as a struggle, a conflict, a warfare with both internal and external evils. But the Divine Word assures us, that the grace of life so works in believers, renewing the inward man day by day, that the conflict shall not only be of brief duration, but be also made the means of working out for them in the near future a transcendently more glorious life.\* “For our light affliction, *which is but for a moment*, worketh out for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory; while we look not at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen; for the things which are seen are temporal; but the things which are not seen are eternal.”†

If the saint during the long period of the middle state must still be occupied with fighting against indwelling sin, then his affliction could not be described as lasting but for a moment, nor could it be said of him that he had ceased from his labors after that he had died in the Lord, and that he had entered upon the things that are eternal, and the far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory.

The Scripture, therefore, flatly contradicts the hurtful error of Dr. Briggs, according to which he affirms, of the saints in their life after death: “That the evil which lingers in the higher moral nature of believers will be suppressed and modified with an energy of repentance, humiliation, confession and determination that will be more powerful than ever before.”

4. *Again, the Scripture positively affirms that believers in the life after death have attained to perfection of character.* The spirits of the just men, mentioned in Hebrews xii. 23 as

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\* 2 Cor. 4 : 12-16.

† 2 Cor. 4 : 17-18.

inhabiting the middle state, had been already made perfect, or, as the word more strictly means, had reached the full accomplishments of end (*teteleionon*), which had been at stake in their earthly course. In their case redemption from sin has been completed through "Jesus the Mediator of the New Covenant, and the Blood of Sprinkling, which speaketh better things than that of Abel." They are there in the presence of God, the Judge of all, enjoying His rest free from all error and sin.

5. It is also expressly stated in the Word of God, *that in the case of many the change from partial sanctification to perfect holiness will be instantaneous.* Those millions of Christians who shall be on the earth at the last day, when the Lord shall come to summon the dead from their graves and call the nations to judgment, many of whom may as yet have made but small progress in grace, shall be changed "in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye," when the voice of the archangel and the trump of God shall sound. And this instant change shall take place in body, soul and spirit from the corruptible to the incorruptible, from the mortal to the immortal. They will then be at once "caught up" together with resurrected saints "in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air," and to evermore be with the Lord. \*

This shows it not only to be possible, but makes it highly probable, that there will be an immediate change from the present condition of sin to perfect holiness on the part of believers, when through death they enter the better world, for they then also go to the presence of the Lord.

If it will be possible in the one case to change from a sinful nature to perfect holiness in the moment of passing from earth to heaven, *it cannot be considered impossible now* for the saint to undergo the same change at death for the reason that it is contrary to some principle of psychology and ethics.

The doctrine of our Standards is based on this Scripture truth and is amply supported by it. It is impossible to use words

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\* I Cor. xv. 51, 52; I Thess. iv. 16, 17.



which could more plainly and explicitly convey the idea that Christ's people attain to perfect sanctification at death. The Confession states: "The bodies of men, after death, return to dust, and see corruption, but their souls (which can neither die nor sleep), having an immortal subsistence, immediately return to God who gave them. The souls of the righteous, being then made perfect in holiness, are received into the highest heavens, where they behold the face of God in light and glory, waiting for the full redemption of their bodies."\*

The plea of Dr. Briggs that the words, "*after death*," do not refer to the moment immediately after death, but were intended by the framers of the Confession to extend over the long period of the middle state, is refuted by the fact, that they qualify both the returning of the body to dust and the recovering of the believer's soul to the glory of heaven. As the body returns *at once* to dust "after death," so a right construction of the language necessitates us to make it mean nothing else than that the holy soul attains, after death, to perfect holiness at once in the highest heaven. This view is confirmed by the further fact that the Confession teaches that departed saints have attained perfect holiness and enjoy communion with God in the highest heaven, while yet their bodies are slumbering in the dust. It is therefore in that period which extends from death to the general resurrection.

But suppose we grant, for argument's sake, that the statements of the Confession and the Larger Catechism are of such latitude as to admit of a harmonious adjustment of the view of Dr. Briggs with them. We do not think this possible, but, if it were, then there is still the strong, clear statement of the Shorter Catechism: "The souls of believers are at their death made perfect in holiness, and do immediately pass into glory, and their bodies being still united to Christ, do rest in their graves till the Resurrection."†

When a company of intelligent men, who are known to use

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\* Confession of Faith, Chapter 32, section 1.

† Shorter Catechism. A. 37.

language with the most painstaking exactness, make three statements on the same subject, two of which might possibly bear another meaning than that which appears most evident on the face of them, but the third cannot possibly be made to mean anything else than that which is most evident in the other two, then these two must, in all fairness, be interpreted to mean only that which is unmistakably affirmed in the third.

And that this is what they intended to express is made clear from still another consideration. It is now well known that at the time when the Confession was framed, the use of the word "*being*" in connection with a perfect participle did not indicate an act as still in progress. "*Being then made perfect*" meant at that time precisely what we now express by the phrase, *having been made perfect*. In Pepys's Diary, 1667, some twenty years after the drafting of our Confession, there occurs this expression, which illustrates this point: "Thence Creed and I by water up to Fox Hall, and over against it stopped, thinking to see some cock-fighting; but *it was just being done*, and therefore back again to Spring Garden." \*

It was not until the latter part of the eighteenth century that the combination of a perfect participle with *being* was used to express the idea that a certain act was progressing at some past time. †

Neither in the "Rudiments of English Grammar," by Dr. Priestly, 1772, nor in an enlarged edition of the same work in 1785, was such an expression noticed. As late as the early part of the present century, Archbishop Whately calls it "*uncouth English*." ‡ It is, therefore, absolutely certain that, when the Westminster divines stated in the Confession: "The souls of the righteous *being then made perfect in holiness*," they did not mean by that a process of sanctification which was to extend over the immense period of the middle state, as Dr. Briggs affirms, but that the souls of the righteous had at their death

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\* Pepys's Diary, Mynor Bright's Edition, p. 357.

† English Adjectives in *able*, by F. Hall, p. 28.

‡ Modern English, by F. Hall, p. 337.



been made perfect in holiness. For they certainly used the purest English of their day.

It is evident, therefore, that this view of the progressive sanctification of believers in the middle state, which Dr. Briggs inculcates, contradicts flatly the plain teaching, both of the Scripture and the Standards of our Church, according to which the people of God become perfectly holy on their entrance upon the life beyond the grave.

That this doctrine of Professor Briggs affects our faith vitally will be evident from several considerations.

It is urged on the ground of a natural principle of psychology and ethics, rather than on the authority of Holy Scripture, and so tends to throw discredit on the Scripture as the only rule of faith and practice.

There is also so thin a wall or partition between this doctrine of progressive sanctification in the middle state and the Roman Catholic doctrine of Purgatory, that the former will very readily slide into the latter.

It will also open the door to far wider divergencies from the faith. Once admit the position that the processes of redemption from sin are continued in the life after death, and it will be impossible to set bounds to them. I have shown from statements of his own writings, that Dr. Briggs entertains the largest hopes in respect to the possibilities of redemption in the middle state. Indeed, his remark about death being a terror to the best of men, if the issues of life are then to be considered final, inevitably suggests the thought of another chance for those who die impenitent to avail themselves of the benefits of redemption in the next world.

In commending, as "*excellent thoughts*," this statement of Dr. Dorner, "to those who die unbelieving their impiety and alienation from God is unveiled, and if, instead of *repenting* and *being converted*, \* \* \* \* they prefer to continue in evil, then the form of their sin becomes more spiritual, more demoniacal." Dr. Briggs almost commits himself to the position that the entire work of redemption, from beginning to end, may take place in the middle state—regeneration, repentance, justifica-

tion, as well as sanctification. For those thoughts could not be "*excellent*" unless they were true, and Dr. Briggs could not speak of them as "*excellent*" unless he regarded them to be true. They are *dangerous* thoughts if false, as we believe.

For these reasons this court should condemn Dr. Briggs's doctrine of progressive sanctification after death.

It has thus been demonstrated that Dr. Briggs contradicts in his teachings both the Holy Scripture and our Standards in respect to the various points specified under the charges preferred against him.

We have also shown that these utterances of his are on essential points of the faith, not only as understood by Presbyterians, but as held by all evangelical Christians.

Dr. Briggs opens up a field for the operation of the processes of redemption, and suggests possibilities in respect to them in the future life, which are entirely out of harmony with the evangelical system of doctrine, and which cannot fail to take much of the pith and point out of evangelical preaching.

In placing the Reason and the Church side by side with Holy Scripture, as fountains of Divine authority which can savingly enlighten men, he completely undermines the confessional doctrine of *the sole supremacy* of the Scripture as a fountain of Divine authority in matters of salvation.

He presents a doctrine of the Holy Scripture which completely undermines its infallible authority as the only rule of faith and conduct. With an extensive field of circumstantials pervaded by errors of which no one knows the number, and in which it is impossible to draw the dividing line between what is essential and non-essential, and with a text that is merely human, in which the exact residuum of divine truth cannot be determined, we have a Bible on which no one can rest with certainty or build with joyous confidence. Such a doctrine of Scripture, if accepted, would be destructive of our entire system of doctrine. We have built that system on the plain statements of Scripture, or on the necessary inferences



therefrom, but, according to the higher criticism, many statements of Scripture must be taken with considerable allowance, and may be positively false. We may therefore just as well cease the work of collecting proof texts for our Standards, since they can prove nothing decisively nor finally.

In fact, if this view of the Scripture were allowed, it would necessitate a complete change in our matters of belief as well as in the manner of presenting them.

The power which the Bible has exerted, and which it still exerts, is due largely to the fact that men have regarded its words and expressions as those of God Himself. They have heard God speaking to them alike in its history and its poetry, in its admonitions and promises with the voice of divine authority. This has made it the inspiration and life to the men and women of all the centuries, speaking of pardon and peace to the believing and penitent, giving comfort to the sorrowing, awakening dead consciences, and evermore urging men to continue in the upward way to heaven. It is a work which will abide forever.

But if, now, we cannot trust the words of such God-inspired men as Moses, David, Isaiah, Paul, Peter—yes, and as Christ, the incarnate Word Himself, and must learn from these modern apostles of the higher criticism how much of the Scripture we can receive as the veritable truth of God, we shall lose that living divine power by means of which the Bible has been so rich a blessing to the world of mankind, and all the more so since these apostles are unable to tell us how much of the contents of the Bible is God's truth, and how much not. And the question before this Presbytery to-day, stripped of all side issues, is whether you will substitute the rationalistic interpretation of the Bible for the evangelical one, whether or not you will stand firmly by that unqualified evangelical Protestantism which the Presbyterian Church has so honorably maintained throughout its entire history?

Whatever may be the decision reached by the Presbytery in this case, it will be judged by the Church and the world, not so much as an approval or condemnation of an individual, but

as an indication of a determination of the Presbytery to maintain, or of a readiness to change, the present evangelical character of the Presbyterian Church. History may repeat itself. It is possible that the Presbyterian Church in the United States of America, after the manner of some of the Reformation Churches of Europe, may be started on its way toward a lifeless formalism.

It is no secret that large portions of the Reformed Churches of Switzerland, France, Germany and Holland, under the influence of this rationalistic method of treating the Holy Scriptures, have become as dead and fruitless as the desert of Sahara. In the Church in Holland, life has become so completely extinct that all hopes of a resurrection have been abandoned, and the attempt is now making to start afresh an evangelical Church on a new and independent basis. This is what a rationalistic way of treating the Bible, theology and religion has gradually accomplished over there. It will do the same thing here, if allowed to have its way—it may be sooner than any one here can surmise. And the opportunity is afforded to this Presbytery to save our Church from so great an evil, in resolutely crushing these errors, and in firmly maintaining the faith committed to us. This does not in the least involve the blocking of the wheels of progress. Presbyterians, like other evangelical Christians, hold their faith intelligently. They are able to give a reason for the hope that is in them, and are, moreover, always ready to welcome any new truth properly certified to.

Nor is there any intolerance in this. It cannot be considered an undue curtailment of any one's liberty to insist on his fidelity, so long as he remains in the compact, to sacred agreements, the terms of which were well understood, sincerely offered and voluntarily assumed.

If Dr. Briggs is burdened with new truth that makes the Church with which he is connected too narrow for him, the whole world is open to him and ready to accord him the fullest tolerance for the promulgation of that truth. No one will restrain his liberty. But, as I have already said, if, in view of all



the light she can obtain, the Presbyterian Church feels in conscience bound to continue her unbroken testimony for a truthful Bible, for its sole supremacy in matters of faith and life and for the doctrine that the redemption of believers is complete at death, it should have the privilege of doing this in the same unrestrained freedom. The Presbyterian Church, in its almost unanimous expression of feeling, is as likely to voice the will of God in this matter as Dr. Briggs. At all events, it is plain that Presbyterians desire to keep their old faith in this respect, in its purity. They do not want to foster these new doctrines of Dr. Briggs; and to force them on an unwilling Church is as unmanly as it is destructive of that very spirit of liberty in the name of which the attempt is made.

It is possible that a Church may be ultra conservative, but jealous regard for the old faith is a good thing, and is especially to be commended when the minimizing of great truths is so much in fashion. The tendency of our age *to believe as little as possible*, is sapping the strength of faith and depriving the Christian life of its vigor. That strength and that life are nurtured by an unshaken faith in the great truths of the infallible Word of God; and since our people deem it of vital importance to hold the doctrines involved in this case as necessary to their strength and usefulness, they deserve to be encouraged and fortified in that position by this Presbytery.

In thus standing firmly by these doctrines of our historic faith, while wronging no one, but exercising charity toward all, we shall conserve important truth, bring peace to our troubled Church, command the respect of the thoughtful everywhere, and commend ourselves to the blessing of the great Head of the Church.





























